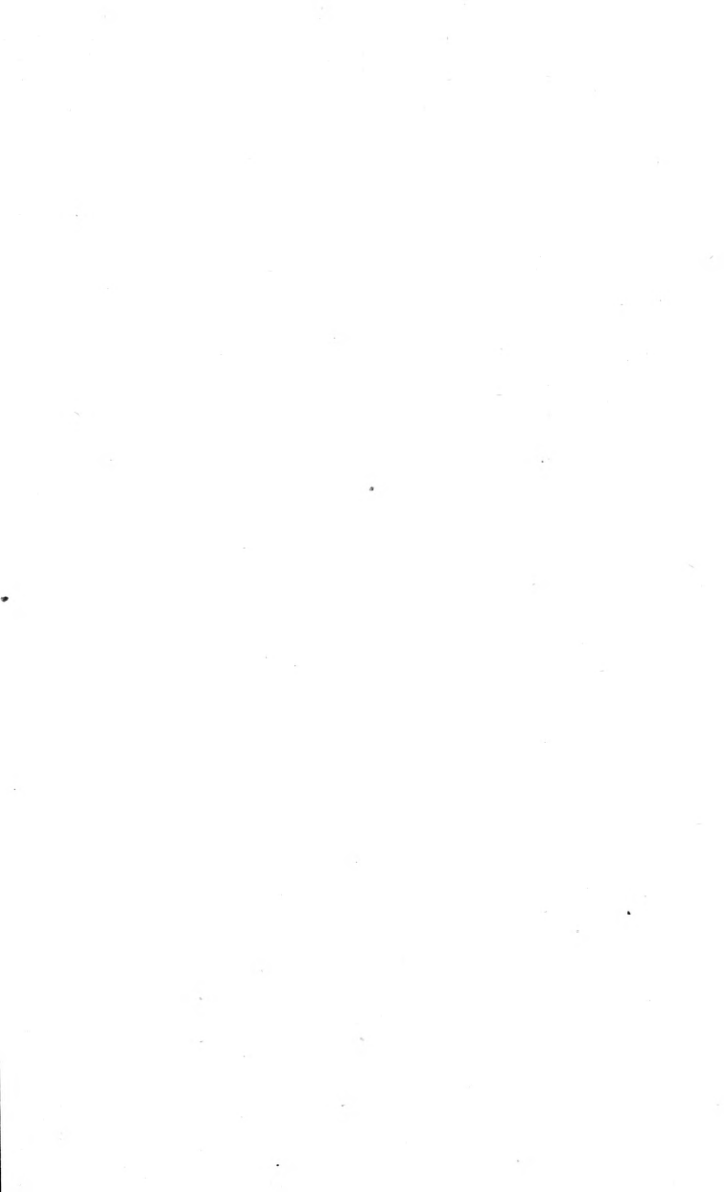




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OUR HEAVENLY HOME.

THE SEEN AND THE UNSEEN.

By T. S. ARTHUR.



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Sylvia Swobly
144 W. Green St, Pasadena Cal.

THE SEEN AND THE UNSEEN.

I.

THE SEEN AND THE UNSEEN.

“**T**HERE is a double life with every man—the seen and the unseen.”

Thus spoke the stranger, while I listened wonderingly.

“And two forms of life as well as two lives, for there can be no life without a form of life. Two bodies—the one seen, and the other unseen.”

“Two bodies?”

“Yes. In the words of Paul, there *is* a natural body, and there *is* a spiritual body. Many read this as if *will be* were in the place of *is*, when the spiritual body is spoken of; but Paul meant

that no such construction should be placed on his language. He spoke of the *unseen* body, without which the *seen* body could have no existence."

"Your meaning is veiled," said I.

"Not veiled," answered the stranger; "you see the truth obscurely, because your vision is dim. Scales shut out the true light. Let me remove them. Does your eye see?"

"If not, how do I perceive forms and colors?"

"That beautiful organ of flesh and blood, called the eye—I mean that natural orb so wonderful in its construction—does that see objects around you?—or is it only a kind of window, through which the unseen, or true spiritual eye, looks forth upon the world of nature? Think! Is it possible for mere matter to have the power of sight?"

"Not unorganized matter," I replied.

"Unorganized. And what is organized matter? It is a material form in which is a principle of life, and the form is determined by the

character of the animating principle. Without the unseen, the seen would be inert and dead. Your eye is an organized form, because there is an unseen principle of life—in other words, an unseen eye—within, giving it the power of natural vision. This is as true of the ear and its uses as it is of the eye; of the brain as of the ear; of the heart and lungs as of the brain; and, still further, as true of the whole body as of a single member. Thus, there is an unseen as well as seen body; and the former is equally susceptible of impressions with the latter—nay, more susceptible, because it is more highly organized.”

“Organized?”

“Yes, spiritually organized.”

“You startle me. If this be true, what wonderful things are involved!”

“We are fearfully and wonderfully made,” returned the stranger, in a solemn voice. “This is divine language, and has a divine and spiritual meaning. Yes; wonderful things are involved. If we have this spiritual body, then we have an

inner as well as an outer life. And do not all admit this vaguely?"

"There is an inner life," I said.

"If an inner life, then an inner form of life."

"And that form, as you say, must take impressions."

"Yes, and retain them."

"Not so tenaciously as this outward, physical form."

"More tenaciously;" said the stranger.

"This I do not clearly perceive. A form so sublimated, so etherial, so unsubstantial, must almost instantly overcome impressions."

"It is not an unsubstantial, but a truly substantial form," was answered. "There is material substance and spiritual substance; the latter is an abiding substance, but the former is ever changing. Think! Upon which does an impression remain the longest—upon your body or your mind?"

"Upon my mind."

“If it were not a substance, could it receive and retain impressions?”

I was silent. The words of the stranger were so full of meaning that I was oppressed by their signification. A window seemed opening into the unseen world ; but, as yet, no objects were plainly visible.

“Look around you,” said the stranger. “There is the dull, cold, lifeless earth. Seeds have been cast into its bosom. Now, by what are they vivified? And by what power does each send up, after its kind, its leaf and stalk? From whence is this wonderful and perfect discrimination? It is from the unseen spiritual world flowing from its infinitely variant principles of life into forms of matter presented in seeds. In germs lie the points of influx; and each, after its kind, receives life from the unseen world. And as the law of like producing like is an invariable law, it follows that, in order to the production of a particular plant or tree in the seen world, there must be a like plant or tree in the unseen world,

from which it exists, as an effect flowing from its cause."

"Trees and plants in the other world!" I shook my head doubtingly. "That is a mere spiritual world."

"Will you have a world without the objects that make up a world?" asked the stranger. "A spiritual world will have spiritual objects."

"Oh, spiritual!"

"Your ideas of the spiritual," said the stranger, "are still dark and obscure. But this is no cause of wonder. Here, all is brought to the test of our sensuous perceptions; and it is hard to rise above and withdraw our thoughts from them so as to think abstractedly. But do not reject as false what you cannot understand when first presented. You need not, you should not, receive as true what comes to your mind without sufficient evidence. But to negative a proposition because the mind does not rise at once into its comprehension is not the act of a wise man. Hold your mind ever in the affirmative state;

but admit nothing as truth which is not clearly seen. Prove all things ; and, in doing so, bear in mind this wise saying—there are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamed of in your philosophy.”

We separated—I and the stranger. But I could not forget his remarkable language.

“Two lives !” said I, as I sat musing alone in the still watches of the night that followed. “Two lives and two forms of life—an outer and an inner life ; the seen and the unseen. Two bodies ; a natural and a spiritual body—each substantial, and capable of receiving and retaining impressions. How full of meaning is all this ! How much does it involve ! And can it be true ?”

The longer I pondered the subject, the more truth seemed involved in the proposition. It was plain to me that the unseen body, the spiritual man, must be as complete in every part as the natural body, which was but as its outer garment,

or, rather, its means of action in the lower and less perfect world of matter.

“And if all this be so,” said I, one thought evolving another, “how wonderful in perfection must that body be, organized, as it is, of spiritual substances; and how perfectly must the spiritual countenance express the passions and emotions of the soul! Ah! how different will all be when we come to lay aside this body of flesh and blood—this mass of inertia, now infilled with the life of the spirit, which it is ever bearing down, and whose powers it is ever limiting! In that unseen world, there will be no veil of matter to hide the moral quality. All eyes will see us in our true characters—in our true spiritual forms.”

I paused. The last words were the plane for a new influx of ideas.

“What is a spiritual form?” I asked myself. I pondered long.

“What is spiritual?”

I mused still further.

“It is thought and affection. A spiritual form,

then, is a form of affection; or, in other words, an affection clothed in its proper thought; for it is by thought that affection comes into manifest perception, and shows us its quality. Can this be so? How much, undreamed of before, is involved! Will evil affections give a lovely form?" "No!" was my involuntary answer.

My thoughts turned toward a beautiful young lady whom I had met during the day, who was greatly admired for her personal charms. In form and face she was almost faultless. I now remembered that, in conversing, she had exhibited a feeling of malice toward another; and had also displayed a large share of vanity.

"The seen body is beautiful," said I, still musing; "but, is it so with the unseen body? Can an evil affection clothe itself in a form of loveliness?"

I pondered this question until there came a great change. I was no longer in my chamber, musing upon different questions, but among a company of people who sat in the porch of a

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large building, the architecture of which was more perfect than anything I had ever beheld. Before us spread out a beautiful landscape.

"This is a new country to me," said I to one who was near me; and, as I spoke, I tried to recollect the way by which I had come. "What is its name?"

"This is the World of Spirits," replied the person to whom I had addressed the inquiry.

"The World of Spirits!" A thrill went through me. Was I then dead?

"Not dead," said my companion, who perceived my thoughts, "but truly alive. You have laid aside the body of flesh, and arisen in the true spiritual body."

"But these are flesh!" said I, holding up my hands; "I can touch one against the other. Moreover, I can touch your body, and it is firm, like my own."

"And yet all is spiritual," was replied. "Your body and my body, and the bodies of all around us, are spiritual in their substance. Our senses

likewise are spiritual. What made us men on earth? Our flesh and blood? Mere dead matter? Far from it. We were men, because we were spiritually organized, and, in the human form, made after the likeness and in the image of God. Does the laying aside of the natural body make us less men—less human? No! And can we be men, without having bodily form and senses?"

As he spoke, there approached one whom I had known in the world, and who had departed thence a year before. She had many questions to ask about friends she had left behind, all of which I answered. As she left me, after a time, I turned to the one with whom I had spoken, and said to him—

"How is this? In the other life this person had a beautiful body; but now she is deformed and repulsive."

"It is because her affections are evil, and not good," replied my companion. "In this world, all are seen according to their quality. Good af-

fections give beautiful forms, and evil affections repulsive forms."

My thoughts instantly turned toward one who, while living in the world, had a sickly and deformed body, but who had a pure and loving spirit, and whose chief delight appeared to be to do good; and, as I thought of her, I saw her approaching. She drew near, and joined the company. Oh, what a change! The bent body was straight and graceful, and the severe angles of her suffering countenance had given place to a surpassing beauty. My heart was touched with admiring wonder, as I looked upon her.

Another whom I had known appeared. He was a man who, while living in the world, had been covetous, but who loved a good reputation, and, therefore, concealed his real character under assumed forms of benevolence and liberality. While in the natural body he was fair in person, but now there was a hideousness about his countenance, that made me turn from him with a shudder; and I understood the quality of his life

from the form and expression of his person and face, as clearly as if "Covetousness" had been written upon his forehead. —

"This man was of goodly appearance in the world," said I, turning to my companion.

"His seen body was fair to look upon," was replied; "but his evil affections were daily and slowly destroying, in the unseen body, every trace of beauty. Come with me, and I will show you some of those who have become so changed from the human form, through evil lives, as to appear more like beasts than men."

My companion took me to a valley, before concealed from view by a dense forest, through which led a winding path. In this valley were companies of men and women, engaged in various pursuits that seemed to occupy their earnest attention.

"Look from this point," said my companion, as we gained a little eminence, "and you will see them in their true forms."

I looked for a moment, and then turned away, sick with the sight.

“What did you see?” asked my companion.

“Men and women so changed as to appear more like evil and filthy beasts, than forms of human intelligence.”

“As you saw them, so are they. While in the natural body, many of them had beautiful forms, for which they were loved and admired. But, in their life in the world, they marred the form and features of their spiritual bodies by evil and beastly affections. One had the cunning of the fox; another the cruelty of the wolf; and another the filthy sensuality of the swine. All this was hid from the natural sight—it was the unseen. But the veil of flesh is removed, and what was unseen has become the seen. They are now before you in the forms that correspond to their true affections.

“Oh, if men knew this!” I exclaimed.

“Return and give utterance to the truth. Publish what your eyes have seen and your ears heard.”

“But they will not believe,” said I.

“Tell it, nevertheless.”

At this moment, I saw approaching one whom I had once loved with a deep affection, and whose loss I had mourned with unavailing sorrow. She had observed me, and was hurrying forward. As she came near, I perceived that she was no longer beautiful as before. Every fair feature was distorted, and there was an expression of evil in her countenance, that shocked me like an electric current. Oh, she was hideous! I turned to flee; but she threw her arms around me, and uttered words of endearment; and her voice, instead of being flute-like in its tones, croaked like the voice of a raven. In fear and sorrow I awoke.

Long did I lie pondering the strange vision. “Dreams are, for the most part, fantastic,” said I; “but they often come in similitudes of truth. There is truth veiled here; I feel it, I know it. An evil life *must* distort the features of our inner man, and change them from beauty to deformity. We know that the soul receives impressions, and retains them. Warp the soul in childhood,

and it ever after retains the unpleasing form, which is ever manifesting itself by means of the outer body. If we could see, by a spiritual vision, this soul or inner body itself, we would see the distortion as plainly as we perceive an unsightly crook in a favorite tree."

And if all this be so, and who will make bold to deny it?—each one of us is, day after day, either marring and deforming the unseen body, or rendering it more beautiful. Every evil and selfish affection, every unholy passion, every indulgence in wrong feelings or actions, deforms the spirit; while every good and generous emotion, and every act that springs from a purified and all-embracing love of our neighbor, is rendering it more and more beautiful, and, if continued to the end of life, the unseen body, when it rises into the light of the spiritual world, will appear lovely as the form of an angel.

Reader, lay this up in your heart, and ponder well the words of the stranger. They are not idle sounds, like tones from the passing wind.

II.

OUR CHANGING STATES.

THE weather is not more variable than our states of mind. To-day the atmosphere is serene, the sky unclouded; to-morrow, an unquiet thrill runs pulsing through all the air, and our heavens are overcast. We are shadowed and troubled.

These changes in our mental condition result often from unapparent causes; and often from disturbances of so light a character, that we look back at them in wonder, and question with ourselves whether something more serious, which we vainly endeavor to recall, does not exist. It is only an appearance that the primary cause of these sudden, and almost uncontrollable changes, comes from without, jarring us from our tranquil self-possession. The elements of disquietude are

all within, though the touch by which they are awakened, may reach us from the outside. If there was nothing within to be disturbed, the hand of discord might feel about our heart-strings in vain. The light step of a child will shake the uncertain bog; but the stamp of a giant moves not the solid earth.

Our states of mind are always affected by those with whom we come in contact. We cannot pass an hour, or even the tenth part of an hour, with any one, and not experience some change in our feelings. Sometimes the change is pleasant, sometimes disagreeable. A visitor drops in. We happen to be feeling dull. Something has gone wrong—we are under a cloud. But, sunshine comes in with our visitor, and at the very sound of his voice, the heart beats strong again. His conversation soothes us into tranquil peace, or lifts our thought into the world of pure ideas, beyond life's petty discords. He leaves us, and our mind is calmer for the day. Again—we are in a peaceful state. Not a cloud flecks the sky.

To live is enjoyment. An acquaintance calls, and almost immediately an uneasy motion is felt. His sphere touches us unpleasantly, and we are instinctively on our guard. In less than ten minutes we feel a sense of disquietude. Evil and disturbing elements become active. Every word he utters comes as a challenge to some bad passion, or hurts some tender spot. He probes our sore places with the cool precision of a surgeon, and goes away, at length, leaving us miserable for the day.

As there is no gratuitous evil, the class of which this last-mentioned individual is a representative, has, no doubt, its use—no credit to the class, of course. It must needs be that offences come; but woe to him by whom they come. All disturbing elements that exist in our minds are evil elements, and as really hurtful to the spirit as morbid things are to the body; and it is just as important that we be advised of their existence, as of corresponding things in the lower plane of animal life. But, while quiescent, their existence

is not perceived. Stealthily their evil work may be going on. Like spiders in dark corners and shut chambers, these evil things are silently casting fibre after fibre, and loop after loop, around our souls, until threads of gossamer are spun into bonds no strength of ours may sunder. It is well for us, then, that some hand open a window occasionally, and let in the light upon these dark corners and shut chambers, disturbing the spiders at their work. There will be, of course, a sudden stir, a shaking along the filmy lines, a sense of bondage as the spirit rises to an easy movement. From repose and self-enjoyment—from false security, there will be an awakening into painful disquietude. We are offended, perhaps, because of this meddling with our individual life. We blame the officious hand that flung open a shut window—we call him a disturber of our peace who frightened the spiders at their evil work, and made us aware of their presence. And he may have intended to disturb us, not that he might help us to cast out these evil things, but that he

might enjoy our pain and humiliation. But, let us remember, that if there be no unclean, no vile and hurtful things, in our minds, the opening of a window, and flashing in of light, cannot touch our tranquil states. If the chambers of our souls are always swept and garnished, sunbeams can only reveal order and beauty.

And so, if miserable for the day, after such a visitation, good must follow with those who aspire after good—with those who, once made conscious of disease, turn to the great Physician. We may not be able to think well of him who discovered to us how weak, vain, selfish or mean-spirited we were, because he only sought to wound and humiliate. Nay, we will hold ourselves guarded at the next interview, lest he reveal to us other spider-filled corners, and humble us in his presence again.

Salutary as the influence of these disturbers of our peace may be, through the revelations they give us of ourselves, they only help us to discover evil, which they scent as the crow scents car-

tion. They are not physicians; have no ointment for the sores they uncover; no balm for the wounds made in sharp thrusts into our tender sides. They hurt us, and then go on their way rejoicing that they left us in pain. With us, if we are indeed of those who are striving to ascend to the higher regions of spiritual life, where the sky is clear, and the air serene, they leave, in their departure, the difficult but essential duty of forgiveness. Let us see to it that our hurt in the contact is less than was intended; nay, that good come, where evil was designed.

Of that other class to which we have referred, the individuals come to us as angels come, searching for good. They are those who say to evil, be far from me. In their company the bad in us hides itself still farther away, or skulks to the dim exteriors of our conscious life, shorn for the time of strength. All that is generous and noble; all that is self-denying; all that gives us sympathy with our fellow-man; all that invests goodness with beauty, is made alive and active in

our souls. They come to us in light—they come to us in love—making truth clearer, and affection warmer. The peace that dwells with them, pervading their atmosphere like the odorous sphere surrounding a flower, and penetrating to our life, is no slumbrous calm. The sun is shining; the air is clear and vital; good seeds in the ground have sprung up in thrifty stalks, and the harvest nods hopefully in the swelling grain. And we feel, while with them, our own earth drinking the sun, and thank God for the signs of fruitfulness in our souls. All is not a barren waste, as we sometimes feared. They have made us more in love with goodness; strengthened our better purposes; taught us lessons of forgiveness, and shown us how to walk with him, who, when upon earth, went about doing good. Blessings on all such! Their lives are in heaven. In the Golden Age, angels walked with men; not in natural bodies, but in bodies of spiritual substance, made visible to the spiritual eyes of celestial men, living in primal

innocence. Sin closed the inner senses, and though

*
“Myriads of spiritual beings walk the earth unseen,
Whether we sleep or wake,”

our darkened vision perceives them not. And yet, in God's mercy, angels still walk and talk with us, leading our thoughts upward, and these are they of whom we have just spoken. Their lives are in heaven; but they dwell in natural bodies, and talk with us face to face. Blessings on them, we repeat.

Our changes of state are all dependent on things within us. Disturbing influences may come from without; but, if there is nothing to disturb, the pressure is vain. The wind that lashes the sea into fury, sweeps scarcely heeded over the level earth. What a lesson in this!—what a revelation! Every touch from the outside meets some response within, or dies unheeded. If to an evil allurements an evil desire starts up, what will you say? That the allurements created

the desire? Not so. The magnet revealed the iron. The evil was there. And so of any and all responses made by the soul. Thus, our changes of state are our instructors. They show us the quality of our lives; admonish us of hidden diseases; and encourage us by revelations of progress in the right way, or triumphs in the good fight.



III.

THE SWEET FOUNTAIN.

“THIS cup is too bitter,” said the lady—“Too, too bitter! I cannot drink of it.” And a shudder ran through her frame. Her face was wan and troubled; her eyes red from a night of weeping.

“But at last, it shall be sweet to the taste.”

“You mock me!” the lady exclaimed, with a sudden throb of almost indignant rejection in her voice.

“Not so, my dear Mrs. Lea,” was calmly, almost tenderly answered. “We are in God’s hand, and all his ways are in mercy. If he permit sorrow or trouble, misfortune or bereavement, to darken our homes, it is that he may open the way for brighter sunbeams to enter. In the bit-



THE SWEET FOUNTAIN.



terest cup placed to our lips, will be found sweetness at last."

"There can be no sweetness in my cup. I shall find the draft grow bitterer and bitterer even to the dregs."

"And yet I say, dear friend! it was dipped from a sweet fountain."

The face of the lady who thus answered was serene; and yet, no one could look into it without seeing the old marks of pain, of care, of endurance and long suffering. The lines were not now sharply cut; but rounded and softened by the verdure which heavenly sunshine and refreshing dew had wakened into life.

"It was dipped from a sweet fountain," she repeated, "and the water is sweet."

"Sweet! Why will you mock me?" And Mrs. Lea, with a half offended air, shut her eyes, and leaned back among the cushions amid which she languidly reposed. Her face was very, very sad.

"The bitterness lies in your taste. But, when

that is refined and made perceptive in a higher degree, then will this cup of offence, as it now seems, be found to contain heavenly nectar. I am not speaking with a vague idealism—no, no—but from life-experience. What we have lived we comprehend. Time was, when the cup God placed to my lips was as gall and wormwood. Often and often since, have I drank from the same cup, and found it honey to my taste. Have you been very happy in the time past, my friend?"

Mrs. Lea did not answer this abruptly-put question, and a period of silence followed. As her friend looked into her troubled countenance—the eyes were still shut—she saw thought beginning to obliterate many of the lines that expressed only rebellion and suffering.

"In the time past," she resumed, "the abundance of this world has been gathered to your door. You have enjoyed wealth and position. But, has your soul, in dwelling with these, found unalloyed pleasure? Did they bring satisfactions,

delights, tranquilities? Was there no reaching of the soul beyond? No yearnings for a higher life? Have you not grown weary, and restless, often, under a sense of inadequacy in all around you to minister to crying wants? Like a caged bird, have you not fluttered as in a prison, panting for a wider range and purer atmosphere? Yes, my friend; it has been even so. You need not answer. We have stood, in past years, very near together, and I have seen it all. You have not been happy!"

"My own fault," answered Mrs. Lea, with slight impatience of manner. "I had everything to make me happy. Now, I lose everything on which my soul can rest."

"So far from that," said the friend, "you will lose nothing on which true happiness is based. Riches and honors have no power, in themselves, to give blessing. That is a state of the soul, and comes from right activities. The will acts in useful ends, and gives delight according to its quality of love to God and man, without reference

to external conditions. So the way to happiness is set before the humblest and the poorest, even as it is set before the rich and great. If the rich will not, in their riches, find the way that leads to true enjoyment, and it is possible to lead them to right paths through the vale of poverty, God, who is infinite in his love, will, from love, take them down into this valley, and in it show them the paths of peace, leading up to the mountains of delight. He will put a cup to their lips which may prove exceedingly bitter to the taste; but, in the end, they will find that its waters came from a sweet fountain. In these sad times, He is leading many thousands down into dark and difficult ways, and they shrink, and tremble, and shudder as they descend. But, He knows what is in them, and will see that no good is lost, and no true source of happiness destroyed. If they will be patient, submissive, and self-denying, he will surely make their sun to shine in an unclouded sky, and their peace to flow as a river. Not, it may be, through any restoration of former things;

but in a new life, to which shall be given, for nourishment, celestial food. The difference of this life from the former life, will be as that between the chrysalis and the butterfly. O my friend, seek for this life! As you go down in the ways of misfortune that must be trodden, do it with a brave heart and with trust in God. He is very near to all; but especially and intimately near to those who, in suffering and sorrow, turn to him in tearful hope, and prayerful confidence. He will make what looks so rough in the distance, smooth and soft as grassy meadows. Down amid those gloomy shadows that appal your soul, rays of divine light will come. Angel hands shall lead you, and angel voices speak words of consolation and hope."

And it came, in time, to be even so. There was good in Mrs. Lea. Potent in her heart were all the elements of a true woman, and these found life and development in a lower plane of social activity from the one in which she had moved in a spirit of proud self-seeking, or idle indulgence.

Her fall, like that of many others, was rapid. In the concussion, she was stunned and bewildered; and for a brief time lay as one in whom all useful life was extinguished. But, Mrs. Lea was a wife and mother. Her husband was dear to her, and so were her children. Yet, had she not filled out the measure of her obligations as wife and mother for all the love in her heart. Wealth had placed her in a false relation to common duties; and brought her within the sphere of false ideas. Because she was rich, and could, for hire, command the services of others, she had permitted herself to accept the hurtful fallacy, that in useful employments there was something degrading. And so accepting the ease and idleness which were offered, she had delegated her most sacred obligations, and left even her tender babes to the exclusive care of those who worked for hire.

But so sweeping was the disaster that fell upon her husband, that every vestige of fortune disappeared, and, at the age of forty, he found himself

just on the level from which he started nearly twenty years before.

Six months after the period of wreck, let us look in upon Mrs. Lea. The cup of misfortune has been, for all this time, at her lips; let us see whether she has found any sweetness in the draught. The home in which we find her is very humble compared with the one out of which she passed, not long before, with hardly restrained tears. She is sitting with two children by her side, one a girl of seven years, and the other a boy of nine. The boy has his arm around her neck, and is looking upon a book that she is holding. The little girl stands in front, with her large eyes, full of light and happiness, fixed intently on her mother's face. Mrs. Lea is reading aloud. There is no sadness in her voice; but, on the contrary, a firm cheerfulness. Every now and then she pauses, and talks to the children about what she is reading. They listen with the deepest interest. Now, in one of these pauses.

and just as the mother raises the book to resume her reading, the boy says,—

“I like this home best, don’t you, Florence?”

“Yes, indeed I do;” the little girl answers, with a quiver of delight in her voice.

“How comes that? This home is not so large, nor so handsome, and we are poor.” Mrs. Lea gazes curiously, and not without manifest surprise at her children.

There is a deepening of color on the boy’s face, and a slight hesitation of manner. He looks up at his mother with eyes so full of love that it is brimming them with tears.

“Why, my son? Why do you like this home the best?”

“Because ——” The flush on his face is warmer.

“Say it, dear.” And Mrs. Lea draws the answer.

“Because you are always with us now!” The tears will not hold back. There comes a half

hindered sob, and the boy's face goes down upon his mother's breast.

Was any joy in all that mother's experience so deep and pure as the joy which now rewards her whole being, giving delight even to the very bodily sensations ; and there is no power in misfortune to cast a shadow over it.

"You love to have mother with you?"

"Don't we, Florence?" The boy lifts his head, not ashamed of the tears, that shine like dew-beads on his cheeks, and smiles upon his sister.

"Indeed we do," answers bright eyes, with a fuller meaning in her tones than she can express in words ; "and I hope we'll always be poor, and never have a nursery any more, to be shut up in, with cross, ugly nurses."

A world of new thoughts come pressing in upon the mind of Mrs. Lea. Scales drop from her eyes. She sees how the true woman in her had been overlaid by fashionable observances. How the mere possession of wealth had deceived

her into the false idea that a mother could transfer to a hireling the most sacred of all duties.

“Is the cup so very bitter?” Mrs. Lea is talking with herself, as she sits sewing upon a garment for one of her children. They have left her side, and are at play with themselves. “My friend was right; there is a sweet taste in the water it contains. The bitterness was in me.”

A few hours later, coming in from the small chamber, where she has, after hearing their prayers, given her children to the arms of sleep, Mrs. Lea stands by her husband, and lays her hand upon him. He looks up into her face. His own had worn a shadow when he came in, not long before; but it is not shadowed now.

“We have not lost all,” he says.

“No, not all. Much is left—much that is priceless in value.”

“Love is left—and duty—and God’s kingdom, into which we may enter by love and duty.” The voice of Mr. Lea trembles a little with its burden of feeling, in this new utterance for him.

He has been listening to the clear, yet reverent, voices of his children, going up in their evening prayer, and from the chamber in which they kneeled by their mother he has gone back through nearly forty years to another chamber and another mother. The treasure-house of good affections and pious thoughts, stored in infancy and childhood, is unlocked now. He has gone in among its precious things, and comprehending their value, he says—"Love is left—and duty—and God's kingdom, into which we may enter by love and duty." It was by misfortune that the key came into his hands. And so in the loss of worldly treasure, he has found the way to a store-house of celestial riches.

"When this cup touched my lips."—It is still later in the evening, and there has been long and earnest communion with the past, the present, and the future. "When this cup touched my lips,"—Mrs. Lea is speaking—"its bitterness made me shudder; yet, now I can see that it brought me water from a sweet fountain. I am happier to-

night than I was one year ago, when no dread of the storm that has swept over us sent a chill to my heart. There is a foundation, dear husband, on which we may build and rest secure, though the floods beat, and the tempests rage."

"Let us build thereon," is answered in low, earnest tones, "a building that shall endure forever."



IV.

COMFORTED.

CLOSE drawn curtains—stillness; such deep surrounding stillness that breathing was audible. In this dimness and silence sat, through the long days, refusing to be comforted, a mother who had lost her child:—Not a child in the innocence of infancy, but in the fragrance and purity of young womanhood.

A sorrow like this is hard to bear. It touches the very springs of life, and dashes their waters with bitterness. It weighs down the heart with a burden that makes every pulsation weak and painful. Clouds envelop the sun—and the earth is in shadow.

“If I could only see her in my dreams,” said Mrs. Ellsworth to a friend, who had left the outside cheerful world, and come into the gloomy

apartment where the bereaved one sat nursing her sorrow. "If I could only see her in my dreams, it would be something. But since the day her face was shut from me by the coffin lid, neither to outward sight nor inward vision has it again been visible. Through how many hours of the night have I kept awake, hoping that I might see her in the darkness. I was not afraid. Dear, dear child! She has gone from me as completely as if I were sailing over an ocean, and she had dropped down into its fathomless depths. Is there no return of our beloved? My faith begins to fail. I had not thought of the spiritual world as very distant. I had believed the separating veil but thin. Thought gives presence, and love conjunction, as to the spirit, whether we be in the body or out of the body; so I had said, and so I had believed. But now I sit and think of Margaret for hours, yet do not perceive her presence."

The friend made no attempt to meet the state of Mrs. Ellsworth by theory or doctrine. She understood her case, and knew that there was no

comfort in words. So after sitting silent for a little while, she said—

“You knew Mrs. Garland?”

“Yes.”

“Have you heard about her?”

“No! what about her?”

“Not that her husband was killed at Gettysburg?”

“Why, no! Killed at Gettysburg!”

“Yes; and what makes the case sadder, his body could not be found. She will never know the place of his burial!”

“Have you seen her?” asked Mrs. Ellsworth.

“No; my acquaintance was too slight to warrant intrusion. But you were an intimate friend, I think.”

“We have been quite intimate. Poor Mrs. Garland! How does she bear this terrible affliction?”

“I have not happened to meet with any one who has visited her.”

Mrs. Ellsworth, who had been sitting in a lan-

guid attitude, almost too spiritless to move, left her chair, and began walking about the room. A new interest had been awakened in her mind. The grief of a friend had for the moment overshadowed her own.

"You will go and see her?" suggested the visitor.

Mrs. Ellsworth stood still. She had not been out of her house—scarcely out of her chamber—since her daughter's death.

"The words of a very near friend give comfort in sorrow. The heart is sustained by sympathy."

"We are near and dear friends; her affliction is heavier than mine; I will go to her," said Mrs. Ellsworth.

Temperaments are different, and so are the principles on which character is based. No two minds bear sorrow alike. The heart of Mrs. Ellsworth failed her as she crossed the threshold of her friend's dwelling. She had come to offer the comfort of her presence—not to deal in fruitless words—and now she felt that even her pre-

sence could only add gloom to the darkness in which Mrs. Garland was enshrouded. A few moments of waiting, and then a servant invited her up stairs. The chamber in which she found her friend was not in twilight shadows, but cheerful with tempered light. As she entered, she met a pale, suffering face, and eyes running over. The face hid itself on her bosom. Tears mingled with tears, and sobs answered to sobs.

“It was so kind in you to come,” said Mrs. Garland, as they sat down together. “I have thought of you so many times, and wished to see you.”

A baby sat on the floor—a baby ten months old. His nurse had gone down stairs. He was half alarmed at the presence of a stranger, and put up his hands to be taken. His mother lifted him into her arms, and he nestled his head close down against her bosom, but with his eyes on Mrs. Ellsworth’s face.

“Dear baby!” said Mrs. Ellsworth, the moisture glistening in her eyes.

"Margaret loved him so! I never look at him that I do not think of Margaret," returned Mrs. Garland. "And he was so fond of her—dear girl that she was! I dreamed of her last night. She was standing in this very room, with Eddy in her arms. How plainly I can see her!"

"Oh, I would give all I have in the world for just such a dream!—to see her, even in my sleep. Oh, yes, she loved Eddy. Come, darling." And Mrs. Ellsworth, in whose heart was born at that instant a tender yearning towards the child, held out her hands. The baby felt the new-born love, and responded by leaping into Mrs. Ellsworth's arms, and laying his head down sweetly on her bosom.

"Just so he would spring into Margaret's arms," said the mother.

"She loved all little children. A baby was her delight." And something of that very delight transfused itself through the soul of Mrs. Ellsworth. Since her own little ones lay on her

breast, she had never perceived such beauty in a baby.

And Margaret had loved this very baby so tenderly! had so often held him in her arms, and felt his head against her bosom as she felt it now! A thrill of strange pleasure ran along her nerves. She had an intimation of Margaret's presence such as had not been given since the veil of death dropped down between them.

"She so tenderly loved little children while in this world," said Mrs. Garland, "that, I doubt not, God has placed her in the midst of them. Their pure spirits are going upwards daily and hourly. Angels are gathering them, like fragrant harvests, from thousands of earthly homes, and garnering them in heaven. I have often pictured Margaret to my thought, surrounded by babies and little children, in ministering to whom she found a purer and more unfailing delight than she ever knew upon the earth."

The countenance of Mrs. Ellsworth lightened. Her eyes glanced upwards; the close compression

on her quivering lips gave way to something like a smile.

“While my thought has dwelt too often with the body in the grave,” she answered, “even when it followed her across the dividing river, it realized no actual condition of life—saw her in no congenial associations—realized nothing. Dear friend! you have put stones beneath my sinking feet. It may not be just as you have imagined; but, one thing is plain to me now—the pure and innocent loves of her heart will not flow forth to be lost like water in sand.”

“No, no,” said Mrs. Garland. “Defect, impediment, hindrance are of this world. They are born of evil. But, in heaven, every pure desire—every tender love—is gratified. Let our souls take up their rest in this; let us find some relief to pain in the sure faith that it is well with our departed ones; and that, if they come to us in spirit, they will be able to draw nearer if our souls are calm and resigned to God’s will, than if

they were shrouded in despair, and turbulent with complaint."

"Yes, yes. It must be so," returned Mrs. Ellsworth. "A new suggestion comes to me. Have I not so hidden my spirit away amid pall and cloud, that my child could not find me? Her love is still the same. Her thought could not have turned itself from me. Why have I had no sign of her presence?"

Mrs. Garland reached her hands for the child, who was still in Mrs. Ellsworth's arms; but Mrs. Ellsworth drew him closer, saying:

"Let him remain—dear baby! I have hardly acknowledged it to myself, but since he has been lying here, Margaret has seemed almost in bodily presence beside me. I came to grieve with you, dear friend, in your deeper sorrow, and lo, my heart has been comforted!"

"I have been hiding away from my darling," said Mrs. Ellsworth, talking with herself as she went homeward. "I have so darkened all the chambers in which my soul dwelt, that she could

not find me. I must open the windows; I must let in the light; I must clothe my spirits with fairer garments. I must no longer think of my loss, but of her gain. As God's kingdom in the heavens into which she has been born is a kingdom of mutual love and service, my life must dwell amid useful things if I would be in association with angels—and she is an angel."

That night she had a dream of Margaret. She came to her in spotless garments, holding little Eddy in her arms, and smiling down upon him with looks of ineffable sweetness. How real it all was!

"Take him, dear mother!" She held him forth, and he sprang to the arms of Mrs. Ellsworth.

The smile on Margaret's face grew tenderer, as she said:

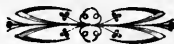
"Of such is the kingdom of heaven."

The dream passed. Morning came. But a sense of Margaret's presence remained. If she thought of her sadly; if she repined at her loss;

if she sat down with folded hands, gathering gloomy states around her, this sense of presence began to fade. The departed one seemed to move afar off. But, in all cheerful work, in all self-forgetfulness, in all service for another, she felt her very near. Sometimes she could say :

“Margaret has been with me all day long.”

And so she was comforted. In an almost constrained effort to leave her own sorrow, and try to soften the pain that lay close and hard upon another spirit, she had found the way of consolation.



V.

OUT OF TUNE.

“IF I had leisure, quiet, repose! If I could escape from this fret and fever of life—from this daily contact with things that chafe and worry; that hurt and agitate. Ah, my friend! There is something wrong. Something out of joint in the constitution of society, when its action is so painfully felt. If I were as immovable as stone; or if my nerves were steel, I might pass through the world with unruffled feelings. But I am a bundle of sensitive fibres, which answer, like a finely-strung instrument, to every touch; giving melody to soft-falling and skillful fingers, and discord whenever a rough hand invades.”

“A living soul, fearfully and wonderfully made,” I answered. “A delicately-wrought instrument, created for choral harmonies.”

My friend looked at me with a face that questioned as to the meaning of what I had said.

“It is not escape from society that you need,” I remarked.

“What then?”

“The chording of your instrument with the grand life-chorus. Drop out of your place—go away by yourself—and you will be as a solitary hautboy, a trombone, a flute, or whatever the instrument may be to which you correspond in the living orchestral world.”

“Ingenious and fanciful. But, accepting your thought as true, how can an instrument, finely-strung, find its true relation and power where all is discord?”

“Impossible in the nature of things,” was my reply. “But there is a grand life-chorus, into which all human instruments, if in tune, may come, each in its turn giving increase to the harmony.”

“My senses are not acute enough to perceive this harmony,” returned my friend. “I listen;

but to my ears come shocks of discord, that send thrills of pain along the strings of my soul. For me there is no hope but in escape from this Babel of sounds. I must get away, and live closer to nature. I must talk with the babbling streams; with the birds; with insects; with sweet airs, perfume-laden; with forest and sky; with all things, in fact, which are in the order of their creation, and so image the Creator. Oh, how I am longing to escape! And I will escape!"

My friend was in earnest, and so, seeking for opportunity, he made his escape, going from the city in which his life had been passed, far away into the country, that he might stand face to face with nature, and so be in harmony with her. He found leisure, quiet, repose. The stream which had, almost from its source, moved along in a free current—now hurrying past flowery banks, now flashing back the sunlight in silvery gleams as it swept over stony places or down rocky heights—composed itself to sleep in a tranquil lake.



"The smooth, tree-encircled lake impresses you with a sense of tranquillity."—Page 59.

He found it very pleasant and peaceful for a time. The rush, the hurry, the change were over. No more discords—no more strivings—no more contact with rudeness and coarseness, with all-absorbing selfishness.

“I am *at one* with nature,” he wrote me, soon after the change. “All her peace, and order, and harmony flow into my life. She speaks to me, and I understand her language. She takes me by the hand, and leads me into green pastures and beside still waters. I never understood life before.”

The smooth, tree-encircled lake impresses you with a sense of tranquility. You look upon its calm surface, and feel its quiet influence pervading your soul. But, as you gaze down into its bosom, you begin to have an impression of something hidden and hurtful; of a place in which evil things may be at work. Though the water looks clear, it has nothing of that crystal-line life so beautiful in the flowing stream. Dark masses of something you cannot make out,

lie at the bottom. Around the edges, weeds grow in wild luxuriance. You begin to feel a sluggishness in the air, and to perceive stifling odors from rank vegetation. How deep and exhilarating is every breath, as you come into the open fields or ascend some mountain paths again! An hour by the still lake has sufficed. It would be death in life to dwell there.

Very pleasant for a time my friend found it in his new dwelling-place, far away from the great centres of humanity. The agitations that swept, sympathetically, from circle to circle of life, did not find him out in his calm retreat—never stirred his heart, reminding him that he was a member of the great body of the people. He was the still lake, reflecting sky and tree, and holding peace in his bosom. The still lake of the soul is affected by moral laws in strict correspondence with natural laws. As it was with the lake on the lower and material plane, so it must be on a higher and spiritual plane. There was no escape for him. Reason would have taught him this, if he could

have gone so far above his sensuous self as to comprehend her clear inductions.

I did not meet him again for years after he dropped away from our social and business world, lost to us as an instrument from an orchestra, or a fine voice from a choir. There was gain on neither side, I think; but loss to both. A few letters had passed between us; then communication ceased. Our minds were not in harmony—they did not chord in the music of life.

Two or three months ago, I was in a neighboring city. The call for a public meeting attracted my attention, and I went to note the proceedings. The organization was going on as I entered the hall, and greatly to my surprise, I saw my friend take the chair. I could not be mistaken in him, for his physique was peculiar. If I had been in doubt, his voice would have assured me. Time, and life, had been at work with him, and through both, his true manhood was coming out. There was an air of strength about him—of self-poise—of will that knoweth no hindrance. I lost half

my interest in the meeting, because of interest in my friend. How quietly, yet with a full consciousness of what the assembling involved, did he, as chairman, hold all its proceedings in the bonds of that rational order out of which so much right action comes. He gave rythm to the whole.

When I stood face to face with him, grasping his hands, and looking into his clear, thoughtful eyes, I saw that he was a new man. That there had been deaths and births—losses and gains—the laying aside of lower things, and the putting on of what were higher and purer.

“I thought you were vegetating in your country hermitage,” I said to him, “and lo! I find you in the very heart, as it were, of the world of action.”

“Come home with me,” he answered. “We must talk about that. I have thought of you a great many times.”

I went with him and passed the night. He was in 'business again. The fret and fever of life

were all about him. He was once more in contact with things that chafe and worry, that hurt and agitate—if we will let them.

“Tell me,” I said, “of your states and experiences during the time you lived separate from the world, and alone with nature. You wrote me that you were ‘*at one*’ with her; that all her peace and harmony and order flowed into your life; that she spoke to you in a language clearly understood; that she was leading you in green pastures and beside still waters.”

He dropped his eyes, and looked thoughtful.

“A mere fancy,” he replied. “You know in what state of mind I broke away from society—dropped out of the orchestra, to use your own figure, and went away with my solitary instrument, to enjoy its music alone. An athlete, exhausted in the arena, finds sweet repose on a soft bed in a quiet chamber. It fills, for a time, his idea of heaven. But, when the weary limbs have rested, and every organ and fibre is flushed with blood and animal spirits, the chamber becomes as

a prison. He could not live there. He would grow sick for want of freedom and action. A similar state was mine. The peaceful retreat into which I withdrew myself, was as the bed and chamber to the strained athlete.

“There was far more of fancy than experience,” he continued, “in those fine words about my intelligent intercourse with nature. I expressed what I believed possible, rather than what I had experienced. It seemed to me that I was standing at the door opening into the arena of nature, and that a hand was moving it on the inner side. My heart bounded in confident anticipations—which were not realized. The door never turned on its hinges—the mystery of nature was not revealed. I soon wearied of asking vague questions of the trees and stones—of the birds and brooks—of the earth and sky. If they answered me, I did not comprehend their language. The peace, the beauty, the order of external life, did not long transfuse themselves into my soul—nay, transfuse is not the word—did not long reflect

themselves from the surface. The old disquiet came back upon me; and I awoke, gradually, to the truth, that disturbing causes were within me, rather than without; that my instrument was not in tune. It was a painful awakening. After this, nature, which at first seemed flushing with intelligence, grew stupid and dumb. I knew nothing of botany, of mineralogy, of entomology; and the science wanting, there was no basis for a true interest in things below or above the earth's surface.

“A few years of dull, weary, soul-corroding life, and I came back into the world again, something wiser than when I went away to live by myself. I do not see that we have changed in anything since my first experience; and yet I find my action accordant with the general action in hundreds of cases where it was discordant before. The change is in myself; my instrument is in better tune, and chords more perfectly with other instruments in the grand chorus of life. There is, I find, a great deal around us that we speak

of as discord, when the fault is in ourselves. Of one thing I am satisfied, and that is, that in the great social body, marred and diseased as it is, there is a life as harmonious and reciprocal as in the single body of a man—a life inflowing from the source of life, and order, and by virtue of that Source, in the perpetual endeavor to reform, restore, and bring back humanity to its lost image and likeness of God. We see this in the effort of every community to get just laws, and have them executed for the common good ; in the devotion of men to useful employment, each in his sphere ; in concerted benevolent, sanitary and corrective movements, by which diseased and hurtful things may be cast out. Now, just in the degree that each individual brings himself into harmony with this higher circle of life, which is common to the whole, will he find discord and obstruction ceasing. The world will put on a new face for him. She will speak to him in a different language. He will not need to go away into the still places of nature to find rest and

peace, for they will abide with him. But, if he narrow his life down to the merest selfish ends, seeking, as some disordered member of the body, to appropriate only, and not to give—to act for himself alone, and not in concert with the whole for the health and well-being of the whole—then he will be out of tune. His life will be jarred by perpetual discords, and he will vainly imagine that he is suffering from defect of harmony in society, when the defect is in himself.

“This,” added my friend, “is the lesson I have learned. Taking my peculiar mental construction, there was no way for me to learn it but by the hard one of experience. I had to drop out of the orchestra and try my instrument alone. What poor music I made, sitting afar off in solitary places by myself! I thought it passing sweet at first; but its thinness and monotony soon wearied, and at last disgusted me. I longed for choral harmonies. How they ravished my ears when their chorded delights broke into them again!”

VI.

SUNDAY RELIGION.

“**M**ERE Sunday religion, and not worth anything,” said a lady, whose age and appearance gave weight to her words. The remark seemed to occasion something like surprise in the little group around her.

“What do you mean by Sunday religion?” was asked.

“Pious observances of any kind—singing, praying, listening to sermons, reading the Bible, receiving the sacraments, and the like.”

“And do you mean to say that these are worth nothing as means to the attainment of a heavenly life?”

“No; far from it. They are of inestimable value; I might almost say of essential value.”

“Then,” said the other, “I am at a loss to

comprehend your meaning. Sunday religion not worth anything !”

“*Mere* Sunday religion, I said, which is about all the religion possessed by the large class to whom I was referring. An exterior of sanctity, without a living principle of charity in the heart ; that is the Sunday religion I meant to condemn.”

“There is too much of that, I fear,” was answered.

“Too much, alas !”

“It is a self-deceiving form of hypocrisy,” remarked one of the company.

“And as such,” said the lady, “without any saving principle. Men and women may sing and pray devoutly—read the word of God in all solemnity of utterance—hear preachings—receive the sacred correspondential elements in the communion—give of their substance to churches—and yet be in the broad way to destruction, instead of in the narrow way to heaven. All these things will be as nothing if the week-day life fail. If, from Monday morning until Saturday night,

love of self and the world rule the whole mind, all Sunday service will go for nothing in our account with heaven. In every day of every week we are writing down that history of our lives by which we shall be judged when this mortal puts on immortality; and will not six days of God-forgetting selfishness stand in fearful contrast with a Sunday record of constrained worship?"

"Must religion come down into everything?" was asked. "How can you bring piety into trade? It does not follow, because a man is earnest in his employment, that he is sinning against God. Nothing can be done rightly, unless the mind goes into it with full vigor; and a man cannot think of business and religion at the same time. He who made us, comprehended this, and set apart one day in seven for religious thoughts and duties. I'm afraid you depress the value of our Sabbath ceremonials."

"It is not in my heart to do so, for I find in them both help and comfort," replied the lady, whose remark had led the conversation in this di-

rection. "Of all good gifts from our heavenly Father, I prize, as among the best, this Christian Sabbath, when we may lay down our burdens of care and work, and gather up strength, hope, encouragement, and lessons of spiritual wisdom, by which to lead truer, because more unselfish, lives, in the days to come. But, if it is used as the only means of advancing heavenward, through devotional acts, and neither God nor the neighbor be regarded in the weeks that follow, then will its services be in vain. There must be religion in business, or there can be no religion at all."

"I am at fault as to your entire meaning," said the one who had previously spoken. "Religion in business! that is a novel proposition. Would you have a man praying and psalm-singing in his shop, store, office, or manufactory?"

"No."

"Then, how is he to bring down his religion into his business?"

"Religion is life," was answered; "that is, a

life in obedience to the precepts of religion. Now, men live through the week as well as on Sunday—in their stores and shops as well as in their homes or closets; and they can lead only one of two lives—religious or irreligious—the life of heaven or the life of hell. This is true of every day, and hour, and moment. Think—must it not be so?”

There followed a thoughtful silence.

“What I mean by religion in business,” said the lady, “is that justice and integrity which never loses sight of the neighbor’s well being—which is based on the divine law, ‘Whatsoever ye would, that men should do unto you, do ye even so to them.’ It is in business that men come in contact with men under the peculiar temptations that love of self inspires; and here it is that they are more especially called upon to live that life of religious trust in God by which they can overcome the evil inclinings of their hearts. In church, and on the business-free Sabbath, they are not in the soul-trying temptations

that meet them in their world's work, and the armor of religion is not so needful for defence. It is to him who overcometh that the promise is given ; and life's battle is not on the Sabbath, nor in church. Our way to heaven is through the world. A Sunday religion, therefore, which is not the complement of religion in daily life, is of no avail whatever, and to them who trust therein will come a sad awakening in that time, when all hearts will be seen as they are. God is a spirit, and they who worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth. It is the heart's quality that gives acceptance in the eyes of God—not prostrations of the body, nor any mere acts of devotion. There can be no true external worship without the internal worship of a good life ; and a good life consists in a faithful and just discharge of all our neighborly duties from a principle of obedience to Divine laws. When such obedience is rendered, external Sabbath worship will flow in natural sequence, and be a form of that genuine worship which brings us near to God, and fills us

with his spirit—a spirit not of self-love and narrow self-seeking, but of genuine regard for others. When that spirit rules in a man's heart, he will be just in dealing, and careful that no one has loss through his gain. He will take no advantages in trade, nor profit through another's ignorance. Charity, or neighborly good-will, will make one with his piety. In the ground of love for the neighbor, whom he has seen, will the seeds of love to God, whom he hath not seen, be planted."

"You make the way to heaven very narrow. Who can walk in it?" said one of the company.

A sigh came faintly from the lips of the lady who had spoken so wisely and well.

"If we would go to heaven we must come into the life of heaven," she said, "and that is a life of mutual love and service. God is love—not self-love, such as we cherish, but a love of doing good. And the religion that leads to heaven is an everyday religion of good-will to the neighbor, showing itself in justice, integrity, truth,

honor, and genuine humanity. Without this religion, Sunday worship is nothing ; with it, conjunction with heaven, and a joy unspeakable. If the way is narrow, it is, nevertheless, the way marked out by God himself. It is not my way—but his. And it is hard only because self-love is strong. Deny this self-love, and heavenly love will flow in. Then the way will become plain, and its rough places smooth. Flowers will spring along its margin, as it winds upward and upward into clear mountain regions, from which new worlds of beauty will open successively to the vision. So I read the laws of heavenly life, as written in God's word."



VII.

THE LIFE TO COME.

"**T**HANK God for the life to come!" said a pale, sad-looking woman, in a voice marked less by the patience of Christian hope, than by fretfulness and despondency.

"What life to come, Aunt Lucy?"

The questioner was a slender girl, not over seventeen or eighteen in appearance, but, really, in her twenty-first summer.

"Are you a heathen, Grace?" The woman's dark eyes flashed half-angrily. "Did you never hear of the life to come, pray? What kind of people have you been amongst? Didn't they teach you anything about God and heaven?"

"Oh, yes." A gentle smile parted the maiden's lips.

"Well, then, you know what I mean by the

life to come—life in the next world—life in heaven. Of this bitter life, with its sorrows, bereavements, disappointments, and pains, I am weary, and, therefore, say in my heart, Thank God for the life to come!"

The countenance of Grace did not lighten up with the satisfied expression of one who understands and appreciates another. A gentle sigh, that was half involuntary, parted her lips. Her eyes fell away from the eyes of her aunt—a shade of thought crept over her quiet face. Mrs. Fleetwood looked at her curiously, and with a falling brow.

Nearly ten years had passed since this sister's child had been left motherless and among strangers, and not once, until now, during these ten years, had Mrs. Fleetwood seen her niece. Her own life had been too worldly and selfish to admit of a generous, loving sentiment toward the child of a sister, whose marriage with a man of no "position or promise," as she expressed it, had been felt as a humiliation; and so, she had been

content to let her remain with those who had received her to their hearts and homes when God removed her widowed mother. But a change in her own life had come, bringing sorrow, bereavement, and misfortune; and now her thought went out towards Grace, her sister's child—not lovingly, but selfishly—not with a desire to be ministrant to her conditions of life, but with a desire of being ministered to herself. From this state she summoned, rather than invited, her niece; and from this state sought to read her character and disposition, when she came, with eyes that endeavored to look into her very consciousness. That she was baffled in this will hardly be a matter of surprise. Persons of her class are without the key that unlocks the inner chambers of a soul whose life-mansions are not built on earthly foundations.

Mrs. Fleetwood was a church-woman whose religion, up to the time when her sky became overcast, consisted in formal service alone. Beyond this she had no conception of duty to God. After all the blessedness of her natural life had

been extinguished—after children, fortune, friends, were gone, and darkness drew down over her world like a curtain, then her selfish heart began to sigh for the blessedness of a life to come—then she lifted her eyes toward the far-off mountains of heaven, which her imagination painted as beautiful with verdure, and balmy with the odors of immortal flowers. And still, as the pictures spread themselves all lovely to behold, and fancy, as she dwelt upon them, gave ever multiplying attractions, she grew almost impatient to put off the poor, torn vestments of mortality, and rise into life eternal.

You understand Mrs. Fleetwood now, and are not surprised at the curious look and falling brow with which she regarded her niece, whose countenance did not answer to her warmly uttered "Thank God for the life to come!" As the eyes of Grace fell away from those of her aunt, and thought-shadows crept about her lips and brow, Mrs. Fleetwood said, with a slight tremor of impatience in her tones—

“Maybe you don’t believe in another life.”

Instantly the eyes of Grace flashed up into those of Mrs. Fleetwood; not with any fire of indignation in them, but with a light as pure as that which dew-drops gather from sunbeams—a light full of hope and sweet anticipation.

“I have been taught to thank God for the life to come, aunt, and to seek for it in duty and self-denial,” replied Grace, a smile playing softly around her lips.

A change was apparent in Mrs. Fleetwood’s face. Its expression was slightly puzzled. The brief answer was not satisfactory to her state, for it involved things admitted by common perception, yet not clearly seen.

“I mean life in another world—life in heaven, Grace.” Mrs. Fleetwood’s manner was subdued.

“There is no life in another world that is not born in this, aunt. So I have been taught.”

Mrs. Fleetwood gazed at her niece with a look of half perplexed inquiry.

"The 'life to come' must come here, or it can never come at all," added Grace.

"Child, you talk in riddles!" said Mrs. Fleetwood, moving impatiently. "I can't get at your meaning. Life in this world is the present life, and life in the next world is the life to come. Isn't that so?"

"There is natural life and there is spiritual life, aunt."

"Well, child?"

"Natural life is the earthly life, and spiritual life the heavenly life."

"Yes. Every Christian knows that."

"Natural life, that into which we are born, and spiritual life, the life to come," said Grace, speaking slowly, and with significant emphasis.

Mrs. Fleetwood, with lips slightly apart, sat looking into the earnest face of her niece, which seemed all at once to become instinct with thought.

"The beginning in each of us of this 'life to come'—this heavenly life, aunt—I have been

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taught to regard as the new-birth, without which, as our Lord has expressly said, we cannot enter the kingdom of heaven. 'That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto you, ye must be born again.' This is the 'life to come,' aunt; this is the actual rising into another state of existence. Death can make no change in the quality of our lives, aunt—so I have been taught, and so do I believe. As our life is at death, so will it remain to eternity. We shall only pass from the world of material, to the world of spiritual things; and these spiritual things will be such as agree with our states and qualities of soul—such as we have loved and delighted in here. If we have passed, by regeneration—a new birth and a new growth—into the full stature of a spiritual man, then, our lives having been in heaven while our bodies were yet upon the earth, we shall simply rise, by death, out of the material into the spiritual plane of existence, and live consciously, as we lived before actually, among the

angels. But, if our lives have been selfish and worldly, we shall pass by death into a conscious association with spirits of a like character, who have been our soul's companions while our bodies and our thoughts have been in this outward world."

"You bewilder me, Grace," said Mrs. Fleetwood, with a troubled look. "I can't see clear. By God's mercy, I hope to pass into heaven, when I leave this world. My Saviour died for me. I trust in him. He is able to save to the uttermost."

"Dear aunt," said Grace, "we must be like-minded with the Saviour if we would dwell with him forever. His infinite mercy has redeemed us from the power of hell. He bowed the heavens, and came down, that he might raise us out of our sad condition; and as he bowed the heavens once for all mankind, so he bows it now and forever for each individual of the human race, and thus makes redemption perpetual. But we must be born again—natural life, which is selfish, must

die in us through self-denial, in order that spiritual life may be born in our souls. As He loved us, and gave himself for us, so must we love others, and give ourselves for them. This life of love is the 'life to come,' and without its birth in our hearts here, we cannot enter heaven."

The shadow fell deeper on Mrs. Fleetwood's countenance. This same doctrine may have been preached in her ears again and again, many times over, but, certainly, never before had it gone down to the region of conviction. Loving others, and giving her life for others, had been no part of Mrs. Fleetwood's creed. Self bounded her world. And as her thought went forward to that "life to come" of which she had spoken, it was pictured as a life in which all delight was selfish instead of reciprocal or beneficent. But that common perception of truth, which, when a truth is first stated, gives it a real embodiment, now struck her mind with conviction, and sobered her feelings. Grace had moved the foundations of her hope in heaven.

From that hour there was a change in Mrs. Fleetwood. In the walk and conversation of her niece, she saw a beautiful illustration of her more interior doctrine. Grace never seemed to think of herself, nor to feel that in serving another she was robbing her own spirit. Always cheerful, always ready to communicate, always reaching forth the willing hand, she so embodied for Mrs. Fleetwood the true life of heaven, that she grew at last to comprehend and to desire it.

“Thank God for the life to come!” It was many years afterward that Mrs. Fleetwood said this again, but with what a new and higher meaning in her thought!



VIII.

THE FACE AND THE LIFE.

“WHAT kind of a looking man was he?” I asked.

“I saw his face only for a moment. It did not impress me favorably. But faces in repose do not always give a right index of character.”

“I am not sure of that,” said I. “The face in repose is, I think, the true face. We all have two lives, the external for the world, the internal for ourselves. And we are with ourselves, living our own internal lives, more than we are with the world living our external lives. Our external is a constrained and superficial thing, to be put on and off as interest, pleasure, or love of reputation may dictate. But our internal is made up of our real ends and purposes—is our very self, and silently, but surely, day by day, and year by year,

is it writing on our faces a true record of our characters. This is why the countenances of the good grow beautiful as they grow old; and why the countenances of the selfish and evil grow more and more repulsive with age."

"I think there must be exceptions to this," remarked my friend.

"There may be apparent exceptions, but no real ones, for there is an eternal relation between cause and effect."

"Look at Dr. Mayfield," said he.

"You cite a strong case," I answered.

"Did you ever know a better man?"

"I think him one of the best of men," said I.

"And yet, his face in repose is as hard as iron."

"It is very hard, and very homely," I admitted.

"Yet all this fades when it lights up in conversation, and you wonder if it can be the same face you looked upon a little while before."

"If you study that face when the glow of ex-

ternal thought and feeling has died away," said I, "you will not find among its hard angles and deep lines any lurking signs of cruelty."

"No; it is not a cruel face."

"Nor do we find covetousness there."

"It could not be there," my friend answered, promptly; "for of all vices, Doctor Mayfield is freest of this."

"Nor envy, discontent, or fretfulness."

"No."

"Hard and homely as his face is, it does not repel you."

"No," replied my friend, "there is nothing about Doctor Mayfield to repel. Everybody is attracted by him."

"If internally he were cruel, selfish, envious and discontented, these repulsive qualities would radiate from his countenance when in repose, and no one could mistake the signs. And so, in looking more narrowly at this 'strong case,' I find that it does not invalidate the theory. In the instance of Doctor Mayfield, it seems that a

spirit of more than ordinary purity had become enshrined in a body of less than ordinary beauty, and of such an unyielding substance, that scarcely perceptible impressions were made, even in the lapse of years. But the artist-soul is at work, and that hard face shall yet put on lineaments that to some eyes will only thinly veil the beautiful."

"And so you think the face in repose a right index to character?"

"I do, and for the reason given."

"There is the face of Mrs. Lawson," said my friend. "The thought of her has just come into my mind. No one questions her goodness. Yet her face when in repose is anything but pleasing to contemplate. Her mouth has a troubled expression, singularly in contrast with its sweetness when she smiles."

"Mrs. Lawson has known trouble," I remarked. "She has passed through many fires of affliction."

"Yes ; the cup of life placed to her lips was bitter indeed, and she drank to the dregs."

"Through many years, she drank."

"Yes—through many years."

"Do you wonder that her face grew in all these painful years into an expression of her inner life? That the perpetual trouble in her heart should have left its unattractive signs upon her countenance? Was it possible for her to pass long seasons of terrible suspense and fear?—to watch, day by day, the light of life grow fainter and fainter in a beloved face, until it went out forever in this world?—to see a destructive vice gaining by slow yet sure accumulations of strength, power over a son, and finally bearing him down, and binding him in fetters that were never broken? Was all this possible to be borne without a disfiguring line of pain? I think not."

"No, it were impossible," said my friend. "Impossible," he repeated, in a half absent way, his eyes fixed, as if some image in his thought had made itself outwardly visible.

"But she has reached her tranquil days, thank God!" I remarked. "The long years of suspense are over—the worst, as they say, has come to the worst—death has made still the hearts whose every throb of pain ran thrilling down the wires of sympathy that bound them to her own. Like a brave, true Christian woman, she walked steadily onward in the ways of duty, and by duty and suffering she has been purified. But the marks of fire are still upon her. She was but human. The old lines of trouble are not yet chiselled away; may never be wholly obliterated."

"And so," persisted my friend, "the countenance in repose does *not* always give the index of character."

"As instance Mrs. Lawson?"

"Yes."

"I say, yea, and instance Mrs. Lawson." I was persistent in my view of the case.

"You do?"

"I do," was my firmly spoken reply. "The face of Mrs. Lawson, when not lighted up by

thought and feeling, is brooding and troubled, and gives the character of her inner life and consciousness, through a long, long series of years, during which time the denser fibres that move in expression, hardened in one direction; and they retain that direction still. Facile they are, of course, to predominant emotions; but, when released from tension, draw back to their old position."

"Then," said my friend, "I must still question the proposition that the face in repose is the true face. You argue against yourself. Mrs. Lawson's inner life is now serene; but her countenance indicates trouble and sadness."

"Memory is not lost, nor old states entirely obliterated," I answered. "As to her inner life being serene, I am not sure that such a condition is yet possible to her. It is, no doubt, in comparison to what it has been. But, after such storms as have agitated her soul, the deep ground-swell must long continue. And, moreover, the best of people have often the most painful discipline to endure."

"I have heard that before," said my friend doubtfully.

"And, if I draw a correct inference from your tone of voice, do not credit the proposition," I remarked.

"I have not said that I question the truth of your remark."

"It is only not agreeable?"

"If your position is true, it is very far from being an agreeable one," he answered.

"The Bible says that the Lord loveth whom he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth."

"I know; but, not to speak irreverently, I do not fancy that way of showing affection."

"The love," said I, letting my voice fall into a low tone, "that consents to the infliction of pain, must be of the truest and deepest kind. Divine love has for its end the salvation in heaven of every one. But the Lord can only save us in the degree that he can lead us out of our hereditary and actual evils, and bestow upon us good affec-

tions. All who will permit him to lead them, whether it be through light troubles or fiery trials, he draws heavenward. In the beginning of this heavenward journey, the walk is in the path of external obedience to Divine precepts. Truth shines into the mind, and shows us the way of life. It seems for awhile, an easy thing to move onward. But after a time, our heavenly Father, who is really seeking to work a change in the quality of our affections, so that we shall not merely do right in obedience to a law, but right because we love what is good, so disposes the things of our natural lives that we come into sorrow, trouble, or misfortune. By this means, he seeks to produce a separation in the mind between worldly things and the things of heaven—between what is of time, and what is of eternity. If there should be in the mind, stored up in infancy, childhood, and youth, by means of parents, teachers, and preachers, good affections, as well as holy truths from the holy Book, the Lord can by means of these lift the striving soul out

of the darkness of natural life, into the light of spiritual perception. With this state is given a foretaste of celestial blessedness, in the temporary fruition of which all earthly delights sink into meanness. Only for a time does this state abide. It is like a temple made suddenly visible in the air, yet having no foundation to rest upon, whose ravishing beauty forever after dwells in the imagination, and dims by contrast even the grandest works of men.

“But,” I continued, “this beatific vision—this foretaste of celestial blessedness is not given to mock the soul, born with infinite longings after the good and the true, and with almost infinite capabilities, but as a lure. There is a temple to be builded, gorgeous and beautiful; but the foundations must be laid, stone upon stone, with labor and care. First is given the fair ideal, as it is given to the architect who is to construct some grand earthly temple. It is seen, only as in a vision; then becomes fixed in the idea; and afterwards is wrought out and built into an abiding

structure. It is to incite us to the work of laying, in patience, self-denial, and good deeds among our fellow-men, the foundations of a temple into which He may enter and dwell that God gives to us, in this first state of separation between things that are of heaven and the world, glimpses of celestial beauty.

“The regeneration of a human soul, fallen into the low deeps of selfishness, is no light task. It cannot be accomplished in a day, nor in an hour. It is the achievement of years. Weak, human hands must do the work—though not unassisted. If divine aid were not given, the case would be hopeless. But this help comes only in the degree that effort can be inspired in man. He must work as of himself; yet with the consciousness and acknowledgment that power to act is from God. Is it not plain, that in the beginning of the effort to resist and overcome the natural inclinations, which are all selfish, he would soon grow weary? That after struggle and conquest on the first field of battle, the exhausted spirit

would shrink from a renewal of strife? And now it is, that we see the operation of that divine love, which consents to the infliction of pain in order to save the objects of its love. There must be another, another, and another battle; and the weary soldier must be pricked to the contest.

“And thus it will be through the whole of this spiritual battle prolonged for years. God loves his children too well to spare the chastening of natural life, whenever it is needed, in order that true spiritual life may be born. But after every battle there is given a season of rest and peace; after the pains of birth, delicious tranquility, and joy for the offspring—and these are so far above natural rest and joy, that no degree of comparison exists between them.

“And this is why the best of people have often the most painful discipline to endure; such discipline as would destroy those in whom is no spiritual strength—as baser metals are consumed in the fires by which gold is made pure.”

I had grown unusually earnest in this effort to

demonstrate the proposition at which my friend had seemed to demur.

“You may be right,” was answered—“no doubt are right; but you do not make the way to heaven attractive.”

“But heaven is attractive; and there is only one way to get there—as there is only one way for the distant mariner to reach his home that lies far across a stormy ocean.”

“Through toil and suffering?”

“Through a denial of selfish and worldly affections; and just in the degree that this denial involves suffering, must pain come. It is because we are evil that we suffer. Evil must die in us before good can be born; and there is pain in both conditions—death-pains and birth-pains—but after the new birth, tranquil peace, and joy that passeth understanding.”



IX.

NOT AS OUR WAYS.

“ALL His ways are in mercy,” said the minister. “Do not forget that, my sister.”

They were the parting sentences of one who had often tried, in the sunny days of Mrs. Fielding's life, to lift her thoughts above the outer world, into a consciousness of those higher and purer things, from which abiding happiness comes. Yet, until now, he had spoken to sealed ears. Until now! Ah, the sunshine had gone from her sky. It was night with Mrs. Fielding—dark and silent night; for sorrow and trouble had found her out. But, in the stillness of this night, the sound of voices, speaking from an inner world, had power to reach her ears. These were angel-voices, and at first she only felt their

tenderness and sweetness, without any clear consciousness of meaning in their utterances.

Less than one year before, Mrs. Fielding was a wife and mother; now, she was widowed and childless. Then she had a home, in which every comfort for natural life was provided; now, she was in the home of another, and dependent. No wonder the truth that all of God's ways are in love and mercy, was afar off from her perceptions, and but dimly seen. She was one of those who tenderly love children. In her own babes, her very life had rested; rested in such overweening tenderness, that weak indulgence took the place of a wise maternal discipline. She could not bear to cross their natural desires in anything, even though reason told her that it was essential to their higher good. Better for them, the wiser ministrations of angels, in the heaven of innocence, than the weak compliances of an over-fond mother. They were safe, and she sorrowing for their loss as one without hope. Widowed and

childless! Ah, the night was very dark around the mourner!

Mrs. Fielding had an active, independent mind. As her bowed spirit lifted itself, feebly, under the weight which had at first crushed her to the earth, and she began to realize her new position and relation to the world, thought turned in all directions, searching for the right way. She could not sit down, with folded hands, and become a burdensome drone; pride, if no higher impulse, would have forbidden that. But, like far too many young ladies, whose parents expend large sums on their education, she had closed her school-girl days without a thorough knowledge of any one of the branches to which she had given attention. She had a clear, intelligent mind, and was regarded as a well-educated woman; but her education was not of the kind to fit her for the duties of a teacher. She was not well grounded in English; nor in French, Italian, or German, though she had attempted the acquirement of these languages under competent instructors. For music,

she had no taste ; and, though she played tolerably well at the time of her marriage, her skill soon left her, for want of practice. Tenderly she loved children, as we have said, and this love led her thoughts out towards them in her questioning as to the future, and she was beginning to think of a school for little ones. "I can teach them," she said. And of this, it had come into her thought to speak several times. But, the way did not look clear before her yet.

"All His ways are in mercy." She was still dwelling upon what the minister had said, and trying to see how affliction and poverty could be in mercy to her, when a friend who had drawn very near since her days of darkness began, came in.

"It must be so," Mrs. Fielding said, referring to the minister's words, "and yet, in coming down to my own case, doubt arises. In my heart, I cannot accept this faith."

"The time is not yet, but it will come," answered the friend, "for it is a true faith. God's

ways are not our ways—especially not as our ways in regard to the individual alone. Good is always the end of God's providences; not good to you or to me only, in the dispensations that reach us, but good, as well, to all who can in any way be affected through our lives. Did you ever think of that?"

Mrs. Fielding's countenance showed a newly awakening interest. "The thought, as you present it," she said, "has never before come into my mind."

"Yet, it must be true. Think for a moment. In the Lord's eyes, all are equal. He regards you with the same tenderness and care that he regards me, and the children of my neighbor are as precious in his sight as mine."

"Yes, yes. That must be so," assented Mrs. Fielding.

"And He is ever making us the ministers of His good, one towards another, through willing service, if there is love in our hearts; but through constraint, and the compelling power of circum-

stances, if our hands are held back, in selfish idleness, from useful ministrations. It is not always for individual discipline alone that sorrows and misfortunes come. Involved therein is the individual's relation to society, and the good to others that will spring from the new life that is to be born in him as the old natural and selfish life expires. We are all God's agents for good, working in our day and generation; and the nearer we draw towards him in self-denial and neighborly love, the higher and more angelic will be the service we render to his children. He has work for you, my dear friend—work for which he has been educating you in these dark days of affliction, and happy will you be when you find this work. The very delight of heaven is the delight of being useful to others, and just in the degree that a love of serving others for the sake of use comes into our hearts, just so near shall we be to heaven, and partakers, in that degree, of heavenly happiness.”

“How can I be useful?” asked Mrs. Fielding,

as her perceptions entered into the thought of her friend; and with perception, came an influx of desire.

“May I suggest a way?”

“Yes—yes.”

“You know Mrs. Garland?”

“Yes; or, at least, have some knowledge of her. We were not visiting acquaintances.”

“She is a light, vain, selfish woman, and completely absorbed in fashionable life.”

“So I have understood.”

“The mother of three sweet little children, who are given over almost entirely to servants. I was talking, only yesterday, to Mr. Garland’s sister about them; and she said, that the neglected condition of his children was a source of deep concern to her brother, who was anxious to get into his family a woman of education, good principles, and Christian regard for duty, who would be to them as a true mother. The thought of you, Mrs. Fielding, came at once into my mind; and I even suggested your name.”

“And what was said?” Mrs. Fielding showed considerable interest.

“If *she* will take the place, my brother will be a happy man,” was answered.

Mrs. Fielding’s breast heaved with a single, long-drawn sigh. Her face grew very sober; her eyes rested on the floor. She sat very still and statue-like.

“Accept the trust, my dear friend! Take these neglected little ones—innocences, precious in God’s eyes—and nurture them for heaven; for that heaven where your own sweet babes have found celestial homes and angel-mothers.”

In the glow of an unselfish tenderness, that warmed the heart of Mrs. Fielding, she answered, tears brimming in her eyes:

“I will not hold back my feet from the way of duty, if I see it plain before me. God being my helper, I will follow as he may guide. I love children. It is my delight to be with them.”

"Shall I make the arrangement for you?" said the friend.

Again the face of Mrs. Fielding was overshadowed by thought. Her eyes dropped to the floor, she sat still and statue-like again. Some natural emotions stirred in her heart, and there was a brief struggle with them for the mastery. When she looked up, a sweet smile was touching her lips, like a sunbeam, and love sat in her serene eyes.

"If I am wanted, I will go," she answered.

"You are wanted," was the friend's decided answer. "To-morrow I will see you again," she said, as she pressed her hand in parting.

In less than a week there was a change of both place and state with Mrs. Fielding. From sad, tearful, idle dependence, she moved upwards into a sphere of usefulness, in which her heart became at once interested. Three bright, beautiful, and affectionate little ones were given wholly into her care by a mother who was daily showing herself to be unworthy of the high and holy trust reposed

in her by the Father of all human souls. Soon was transferred the sweetness of that unselfish love of children, which is the mother's highest blessing—passing from a cold and worldly heart to one in which suffering was accomplishing its true work.

Mrs. Fielding, as we have said, was one of those who tenderly love childhood. Towards the babes, who were flesh of her flesh, this love was overshadowed by the weakness of a natural, maternal tenderness, that shrank from the exercise of needed discipline. Now, she was truer to all perceptions of right and duty. To her own children, love had been weak and compliant, but towards these children of her adoption, it was clear, strong, wise and tender.

Five years passed on with Mrs. Fielding, each bringing to her heart new increments of abiding peace. The neglected little ones had been taken at once into her love, and wisdom had prompted this love ever to seek their highest good. They were, in her affections, as though born of her own

body. The mother-instinct in her nature had gone fully out to them.

Five years had passed ; and, for more than two years, the unworthy mother of these children had been at rest from earthly passion. Her sun went out ere life had touched its fair meridian ; and there was not much heart-grief at her loss. So the mere selfish worldlings die. Even those who stand nearest, and whose ties are, or should be, strongest, rarely sorrow as those who refuse to be comforted.

A man of a strong, true, tender nature was Mr. Garland. Life to such an one, bound to a mere worldly, vain, selfish and fashionable woman, is little more than a weary desert. Dutiful, patient, and upright had he been through all the years of an unsatisfying union ; and when death closed the compact, he gave tears to the memory of her who had once been dear to him ; of her who was the mother of his precious children—and threw a veil over the unhappy past.

Two years had lapsed away since the angel of

death drew her from his side. Mrs. Fielding still held her place as the true mother of his children. Her life had become so bound up in their lives—their good so dependent on her ministration—that no thought of separation had intruded.

Is it remarkable that a true man and a true woman, whose daily lives so met in a mutual interest, should be attracted by stronger forces? Is it remarkable that respect, regard, and admiration should take love into their fraternity, and give her the highest place?

“As you are, and have been, for years, their true mother,” said Mr. Garland, taking the hand of Mrs. Fielding one evening, as she came back from the apartment where the children slept, to their family sitting-room—he had listened, as he sat alone to the tender inflections of her voice as she talked with, and read to them; that voice stirring emotion deeper and deeper, like music to which the heart lifts itself in sweet responses. “As you are, and have been, for years their true

mother, will you not be a mother to them in name also?"

He held the hand tightly, and looked into her face. Her eyes, startled at first, dropped away from his, and fell upon the floor. Mr. Garland felt an impulse in her hand, as if she were about to withdraw it, and his, with a responsive impulse took hold with a firmer clasp.

"The currents of our lives," he said in his calm, true, earnest voice, "have in God's providence been for some time running side by side, taking equally the sunshine and shade, and feeling, almost as one, the rippling breezes. Shall they not flow together? I testify, here, to your dignified, womanly conduct in every relation in my home. You have been true to yourself and your sex in all things. So true, that from respect and admiration, a deeper and tenderer feeling towards you has been born. I say this frankly. And now, Mrs. Fielding, how stands the case? Shall our lives flow together as a single stream? It is for you to say."

For more than a minute Mrs. Fielding stood, looks downcast and breath indrawn to an almost imperceptible respiration. When she raised her eyes, slowly, they were wet with blinding tears, and her lips had an irrepressible quiver; but Mr. Garland saw light shining through the tears, and consent on her trembling inarticulate lips. He led her to a seat.

“I have not sought this, Mr. Garland—heaven be my witness——” Her delicate woman’s nature shrank.

“And I am also your witness, dear, true, right-hearted friend, whom God—his ways are not as our ways—has so kindly led to my side! Be nearer and dearer to me than a friend; that is, if in your heart you can draw nearer. I do not want the hand I hold unless all that can bless a man goes with it.”

And the blessing was his.

How sweetly, purely, and tranquilly flowed their stream of life, full to the grassy and flower-decked brim!—a true man and a true woman,

with high aims and heaven-rising aspirations, walked onward side by side in duty and love, and not a heart-throb beat in discord. Could an idle, sorrowing, self-afflicting life have so crowned the years of Mrs. Fielding with blessing? It is only along the path of usefulness that the Lord can lead to life's best fruitions here, and the happiness of heaven hereafter.

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X.

OUR HEAVENLY HOMES.

“A LITTLE while longer,”—and the speaker lifted her eyes upwards with a pious air—“only a little while longer, and then I shall put off this vile body, and go upwards to my home!”

“Where the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest.” The response came from a sad-looking person, on whose face discontent and weariness of life were strongly written. “Only a little while longer,” she added, repeating the words of her who had first spoken. “There are some of us who would bless God if our feet were as near their journey’s end as yours. The ordeal of this life is not an easy one. Toil, sorrow, weariness, disappointments—from cradle to grave the path is rugged; and out of the

depths of its pain and darkness the soul cries out, 'Lord, shorten the way!'

"Ay, shorten the way," groaned a third of the group which had surrounded the bed of a sick sister. "We have no house here—no abiding place—no continuing city. Open, Lord, the pearly gates of the new Jerusalem, and let our feet move down the golden streets."

Pious responses fell from tremulous lips, and pious eyes went upwards.

"Going home." One who had not, till now, spoken, let her voice steal out in a low, but firm utterance. She was a woman who had passed the summit of life, and was now stepping downwards on the graveward side. Her face was placid, though pain marks were on her forehead, and pain shadows on her lips. "Going home. Home is a sweet word, my sisters! But to what kind of homes are we going? That is worth a thought."

"To heavenly homes," was answered by one. "To the paradise of God."

"In my Father's house are many mansions,"

said another, repeating the sweet assurance of our Lord.

“We are in exile—wanderers from home—waiting and longing for the time of our return,” sighed out a third.

“Did it never occur to you,” said the one who had asked as to the kind of homes to which they were going, “that our dwelling-places in the other life will be just what we make them?”

Eyes full of questions and doubts were turned upon the speaker.

“I go to prepare a place for you, that where I am ye may be also.” It was the sick sister’s answer. “The Lord prepares and makes beautiful our heavenly homes. The mansions are ready and waiting our arrival.”

“And we do nothing towards the work?” asked the last speaker.

“We must be meet for the habitation of angels.”

“Vague all, my sisters,” was answered. “Let us look inward, and study the movements and re-

sults of our own lives. We build, each for himself, our eternal dwelling-places, and when we come into their manifest occupation, we shall find them beautiful or deformed, according as we have made them. It is so in this life; and the order will not be changed. As we feel and think, and thence act, so are our surroundings here; and such will be the law of our surroundings in the life to come. Can it be otherwise? We should be indeed strangers and aliens, if the homes in which we dwelt did not correspond with our states of thought and feeling. The mind makes for itself a habitation, and peoples it with companions, among which it loves to abide. This is its home. Death cannot change these companionships; but, by the removal of external and intervening things, renders them closer and more intimate. Turn your thoughts inward; think calmly, closely, seriously; and your convictions will assent to what I have said."

A few moments of silence, but no reply. The speaker went on.

“ We are too much inclined to look at death as the producer of some great change in our inner lives. We talk as though we expected to put off discontent and selfishness; hardness towards the neighbor; jealousies and anger; all the evil things we cherish in our minds—and to rise into some vaguely conceived states of celestial blessedness, purity and peace. My sisters, this is all a vain delusion. Simply and nakedly as we are when we die, shall we rise into a perception of our existence in the spiritual world. There are two worlds, remember—the spiritual and the natural; one interior, the other exterior; and we live in both of them at the same time:—in the outer or natural world as to our bodies and senses; in the inner or spiritual world as to our souls and mental consciousness. Now we dwell as to our bodies in material homes, among visible companions; and at the same time, as to our spirits in homes not made with hands, among invisible companions, with whom our minds hold intercourse. And of what quality are these compa-

nions? Ah, that is the significant question! Do they lift our thoughts heavenward, or hold us near the earth? Do they stimulate pride or teach us lessons of humility? Are they ministers of discontent or resignation? Do they inspire love of self and the world, or love of God and the neighbor? We do not part company with these companions at death—they belong to our inner habitation; to the dwelling-places that we are building for our souls. God cannot take us out of ourselves, for that would be to destroy us. He can only provide for our happiness according to the free determination of our lives, and give of the good things of his love and wisdom in the degree that we are capable of receiving them. The measure can be no greater and will be no less. All that we can receive, he will give—for he is the good Giver.”

No one ventured a reply, for the sister's words had penetrated the region of conviction.

“And so, my sisters, let us not turn our eyes longingly away to an imaginary home beyond the grave, which we can never find; but inwardly

upon ourselves, in careful examination. Let us look well to the home we are building, and to the companions with whom, in our hidden hearts, we most delight to associate. If the spirits of pride, indolence, murmuring, impatience, self-indulgence, envy, disregard of the neighbor, vaunting esteem, and conceit of personal goodness, dwell with us here, we shall go home to them when we pass to the other world. But if patience, meekness, love of the neighbor and forgetfulness of self, endurance, humble-mindedness, and the delight of serving others, abide in our souls, we shall enter the heavenly mansions where angels dwell forever with the Lord. Let us then no longer keep looking away and longing for the time of going home, but rather set ourselves diligently to the work of furnishing the homes which are to be our eternal abiding-place; for, as we make them, so will they be found when we come to enter and dwell in them consciously. May that time be far away, for we cannot have too many years in which to build and people our heavenly homes."

The silence that followed was broken by the sick woman, who, with clasped hands and tearful eyes raised heavenward, thus prayed audibly—

“Lord, give thy servant patience to wait, and diligence to work.”

And the murmuring responses that met her prayer, showed that the lesson was understood.



XI.

FORGIVENESS.

AMONG the varieties of individual experience, we occasionally meet with a singular condition—utter want of faith in God's willingness to forgive. In this state of mind was a lady of considerable intelligence, and well known for her charities. Early in life, she had been gay and fashionable; but, after thirty, became a devout church member.

Mrs. Olney was not a happy Christian. From the very commencement of her religious experience, her soul dwelt under a cloud. That "God is love," she read in Scripture; and she also read therein this other declaration—"I am a just God." But, from some mental peculiarity, she was not able to see how, in forgiving her for her

past transgressions, God could be in harmony with himself.

“He must be just as well as merciful,” I heard her remark, one evening, to a friend. The answer, to which I listened, went over the common ground of atonement for the satisfaction of justice. I watched Mrs. Olney’s face. It did not brighten. The argument failed.

“Yes—yes—I understand all that,” was her answer.

“And are you not satisfied to rest here?” asked the friend.

“No,” was the despondent reply.

“Why not?”

“Simply, because having broken the law, and thus offended God, I cannot see how forgiveness is possible. My early life was an insult to him. I made light of his precepts; I scorned the offers of salvation. When he said, ‘Give me thy heart,’ I turned from him, and laid my heart an offering upon the shrine of this wicked world. And now,

when I seek him, he hides his face from me. I am in terror, but he mocks at my fear."

"Every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh, it shall be opened." So answered the friend in words of divine truth.

I again observed the lady's face, to see how this clear declaration would affect her. For a moment, it seemed to lighten; but the shadow was not lifted.

"It must be regarded only as an appearance that God is angry," I ventured here to remark. "Divine love—infinite compassion—are qualities adverse to anger. The wicked, under such suffering and restraint as are the consequences of evil, naturally enough attribute their pains to the angry punishment of an offended God. And when God speaks in warning to the wicked, it is as a father to his disobedient children. He appears with signs of anger, though love and compassion are in his heart. There is a state of evil among men, which will obey no law but that of

fear. The sword must be unsheathed, and the right arm bared, or the wicked will not submit. This is the state addressed, when anger and punishment are spoken of in the word. God's infinite love, which yearns over every creature, was veiling itself under forms of wrath."

She listened calmly, and with evident interest; and did not offer any suggestions adverse to what I had said. Still, I could see no light drifting through the shadows on her face. Her mental condition interested me, and I endeavored to comprehend its meaning; but, after a long conversation, I found myself unable to get down to the real cause of her morbid state. To the clearest teaching of the Bible, and the fairest conclusions drawn therefrom, she had only her doubts to oppose. They were, enshrouding her like a pall, and no sun-rays of truth seemed strong enough to scatter them.

"I cannot see it," was the answer she gave; "and unless *I* can see it, what help for me is there in all you say?"

I was interested in Mrs. Olney. So far as her outward life was concerned, she lived in obedience to the precepts of religion. She was always in her place at church, and among the foremost in the various uses of church membership—a devout worshiper, and a doer of good deeds. If any, it seemed to me, were to live in the sunshine of spiritual confidence, her sky, of all others, should have been clear. But, clouds and obscurity were there.

“Do you know Mrs. Olney?” I inquired of a most excellent lady, who was a member of the same church to which Mrs. Olney belonged.

“I used to know her,” was the answer received. “But we have not spoken for ten years.”

“I am sorry to hear you say this,” I returned. “Mrs. Olney is a true woman, if I read her aright.”

“There is much in her character that I admire,” said the lady, “and from all that I hear of her, she is trying to lead a good and useful life.

But, she bears in her heart a spirit of unforgiveness."

"Towards whom?" I asked.

"Towards me," she answered. "I was so unfortunate as to offend her very deeply. The cause of offence I will not excuse. I am not surprised that she became angry; nor even that she refused, for a long time afterwards, to regard me with anything but displeasure. The act, on my part has been sorely repented—I have suffered, on account thereof, painful humiliation of spirit. I condemn it as wrong—I have put far from me the spirit by which it was inspired; and I believe, that, as a sin before God, it is not kept in remembrance against me. If Mrs. Olney could only forget and forgive!"

I had now the clue to Mrs. Olney's state. It was her own unforgiving spirit that clouded her mind. In her idea of God, there was an attribution of perverted human passions; and as she was not able to reach a state of forgiveness towards her friend, so she found it impossible to under-

stand how God could put aside anger and receive her with divine forgiveness.

“Have you made efforts towards a reconciliation?” I asked.

“Not of late. After she became a member of our church, I several times purposely threw myself in her way; but she refused to meet my advances. Once, happening to be in the same company, where conversation was general, I responded to a remark which she had just made; but she took no notice of me whatever. On another occasion we were introduced by a mutual friend, who was not aware that we had met before; when she bowed icily, not even offering her hand—and after standing in silence for a few moments, turned away, and moved to a distant part of the room.”

“Has she spoken against you?” I further inquired.

“I fear that she has, judging from the manner of a few who are her intimate friends. In several instances, I have observed a drawing off from

me, and a standing at a distance, of persons who were once familiar and friendly. The cause of this, right or wrong, I have laid at her door. Not that I believe her capable of trying to injure me through indulgence of any vindictive spirit—for I think better of her Christianity than that; but, not having forgiven me in her heart, she finds it impossible to think of me as being in any essential degree changed from what I was ten or fifteen years ago, and so not only retains her old dislike, but infuses something of its quality into the minds of her intimate friends.”

Now I understood Mrs. Olney's case better. At our next meeting, I so managed the conversation, that it drifted towards herself and her unhappy state of mind. Shadows gathered over her face; all cheerfulness died away from her tones.

“I have thought of you a great deal, since our last conversation,” said I.

This expression of interest naturally opened her mind to anything I might say.

"The hindrance," I added, "must be in yourself; for it cannot be in God."

"If I knew the hindrance!" she sighed heavily.

"Is it not possible," I suggested, "that somewhere in your heart, hidden away from distinct consciousness, dwells an unforgiving spirit?"

Her eyes were cast down as I spoke; but, she raised them instantly from the floor, in a half startled way, fixing upon me a look of inquiry.

"It often happens," I continued, "that our ideas of God take the hue of interior states. We can only think of him as like-minded with ourselves. Angry at sin, because we are angry when the laws we make are violated; unforgiving, because we cannot forgive those who trespass against us."

She dropped her startled eyes away from mine, and let them rest upon the floor again.

"There may be much involved in what you say," she remarked, not long afterwards, in a subdued voice. "Some things are hard to forgive," she added, like one thinking aloud.

“And yet,” I ventured to say, “only in the degree that we forgive men their trespasses, can we expect God to forgive our trespasses—in other words, there must be a forgiving state in our own hearts, before we can have any realizing sense of the Lord’s infinite forgiveness.”

Evidently, thought with her was flowing in a new direction. I did not think it well to press the subject, but left her to continue, or change it, as she might feel inclined.

“Do you really think,” she asked, “that God only forgives us in the degree that we exercise forgiveness towards others?”

“Literally, that is the teaching of Scripture,” was my reply. “‘If ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your heavenly Father forgive your trespasses.’ But, going past the literal sense of this law, let us go down to its spirit. A state of true religion is a state of love—love to God and the neighbor. If we cannot forgive, we cannot love. God is not angry—he does not decline forgiveness—but, because of our unforgiving

states, he cannot dwell with us in love. Ever he stands at the door, knocking, and asking for entrance. It is for us to open the door, by removing the evil things set in it as bars and bolts ; and until we do this, he cannot enter."

A window was opened in the mind of Mrs. Olney, through which clearer light came in. What she had regarded as only a just displeasure towards one who had injured her in past times, but whose life in the present was, to human eyes, blameless, she now saw to have in it the hard qualities of an unforgiving spirit. It was for what had been done to her, that she retained dislike. Mrs. Olney belonged to that class of persons, who, when clearly satisfied in regard to any course of action, move forward with resolute self-compulsion. First she decided, that, as a Christian woman, she could no longer hold towards the lady of whom I have spoken the attitude of a stranger. Next came the question as to how the lady was to be approached—whether formally, and with oral reference to the past ; or, by

friendly advances, when next they happened to be thrown together in company. The latter method was chosen; and the opportunity was not long delayed. I was present, and witnessed the unobtrusive scene. Perhaps no other person had any conception of what it involved.

The lady referred to, as having given offence to Mrs. Olney years before, was sitting on one end of a sofa. She had been conversing with a friend who had just risen and crossed the room, leaving the place at her side vacant. At this moment, I saw Mrs. Olney quietly pass over, and occupy the seat, offering her hand as she sat down. The hand was taken and held—not at once relinquished. Both faces were in full view. That of Mrs. Olney was considerably heightened in color; but, its expression, though subdued, was frank and kind. Over the other face, light was leaping; and I saw sudden tears almost brimming the eyes. Only for a short time, the natural embarrassment of this meeting continued. The tender of forgiveness and Christian fellow-

ship—for all that was involved—was so gladly accepted, that Mrs. Olney felt her heart beginning to warm and glow, almost immediately, with new-born pleasures.

For nearly the whole of that evening, these two old friends, between whom a gulf of years had, in a moment, been bridged over, kept close together. There was, in Mrs. Olney's countenance, a new expression. All the clouds which had rested over it for so long a period were swept away, and peace dwelt there amid sunshine. The reconciliation was complete. From that hour, they became tenderly attached to each other; and were inseparable co-workers in all the external things appertaining to their church membership.

“You have come up from the valley of doubt,” I said, in meeting her not long afterwards.

“Yes,” she answered. “I am not troubled as in former times. That strange, shadowed state of the soul no longer exists.”

“Were you conscious when and how it passed

away? There is a lesson in your experience, from which others may profit."

Mrs. Olney reflected for a little while.

"It was all here," and she laid her hand over her heart. "God's love was not withholden. The obstruction was in me. The memory of wrong was cherished, brooded over, held almost as a sweet morsel under my tongue. Not being able to forgive, I could not realize the possibility of forgiveness in God. The words of Scripture were plain enough; and I tried to rest on them with confidence. But, external faith and interior conviction, are very different things. I was in darkness and doubt, and there seemed no hope for me. But, when the law of forgiveness ruled in my own soul, doubt and darkness fled away. It seemed as if I had passed from a narrow, suffocating chamber, out into the free air, and under a cloudless sky. In the freedom of my new state, I am in wonder at the bondage from which I have been delivered. The process of cause and effect, I am unable to follow. I only know, that,

whereas I was blind, now I see. God has not changed, for he is unchangeable. My own state has governed all."

And so it is in every religious experience. Our own states determine our ideas of God. He is to us an angry God, because we are angry and vindictive towards others; a hard exacter of legal penalties, because we will have the uttermost farthing; slow to forgive, because there is a spirit of unforgiveness in our hearts. But, when love dwells with us, He is love.



XII.

IS IT WELL WITH YOU?

“IS it well with you, my brother?” Such was the preacher’s salutation. He was not a young man, standing erect in conscious strength, abounding in doctrine and clear in logic; nor in the vigor of middle age, with full fruited boughs just beginning to droop from their proud erectness; but an old man, in whom perception had taken the place of doctrine and logic—wise because good.

“Is it well with you, my brother?” He had grasped the hand of one in whose house, for many years, had been set apart a guest-chamber for the servant of God.

“I trust that it is well with me,” replied the

host, as he returned the old man's greeting, and then led him into the house, giving him of the best he had to bestow.

It was midday when the preacher arrived. In the evening, he sat alone with his brother in the church, talking on themes of immortal interest. At first, he was a listener; and then the thought of his brother dwelt wholly in things of natural life. He spoke of his farm, his mill, his money at interest, and the prosperity with which God had blessed him.

"He hath made my corn and wine to increase," he said, with a confidence that was near to boastfulness.

A faint sigh parted the old minister's lips; and a slight shadow veiled the sweet serenity of his countenance.

"Have you never thought, my brother, that God's increase of corn and wine, means something more than this?"

The question had a disturbing effect.

"That there are corn and wine for the soul's

nourishment and growth, as well as corn and wine for the body?" he added.

"Doubtless it is so," replied the brother, with that marked falling of the voice which accompanies the reluctant admission of truth in conflict with an existing state of mind. "We do not live by bread alone. And yet, God blesses us in our basket and store—prosperes us in our outgoings and incomings."

"His providence touches us in the minutest things of external life," answered the preacher. "When it is well with us, the blessing is from his hand. But, 'well with us,' has a higher significance than you have expressed by the words 'basket and store.' *Is it well with you, my brother?* Let me put the question again. What is the state of your mind?"

"I trust in God," was returned, with unfaltering speech. "I know in whom I have believed. Faith is the anchor of my soul."

"Your acceptance is clear?"

"Yes." Not spoken with full confidence.

There followed a brief silence.

“It is the saddest of all sad things, a mistake in this, my brother,” the old man said, with an impressiveness that hurt his listener, for, both in language and tone was an intimation that he was building his immortal hopes on foundations that might not stand.

“There are two elements that go to make up every state of mind,” continued the preacher, after a pause in which there was no response, “thought and feeling. The thought is most exterior, and in it we see reflected, as from a mirror, the feelings, the desires, the impulses that have in them the essential qualities of a man’s life. But, thought has wings, and the power to rise into higher and purer regions—to separate itself, for brief periods, from its bondage to low and worldly desire; and thence, the danger of self-deception—of considering our states of transient thought, and not our states of permanent feeling, as the just expression of the interior quality as it

is seen by God. Do you apprehend me, my brother?"

"In a degree," was answered.

"As God sees us, so we are; and as we are, when death finds us, will be our state in the other life. Lovers of the Lord's kingdom, or lovers of ourselves."

"But, how can we see ourselves as God sees us?" asked the brother, with a suddenly awakening concern. "He knows our hearts better than we can know them. Nay, He alone knows them."

"True; but He has given us the clearest instruction. His word is a lamp unto our feet and a light unto our path. It is full of heavenly teaching. Let us ponder a single passage, and bring our individual lives to the standard therein proclaimed. Speaking of the godly, or regenerate man, the Psalmist says, 'His *delight* is in the law of the Lord.' Mark the expression—*His delight*. Now, feeling, of which delight is predicated, is interior to thought. When there is delight in

the law, then there is meditation. First, the delight; then the meditation—not a mere transient uplifting of thought to purer regions, but a dwelling therein with love. Ah, my brother! Do we not find a revelation in this brief passage, clear as noonday, and full of instruction? Not one to discourage us, because our life falls far below the state described; but one full of encouragement, because it shows us that to which our heavenly Father wishes us to aspire. And now again, as one sent to you of God—for I am his servant, and he has laid on me the duty of winning souls—let me ask, Is it well with you, my brother?”

How very tenderly, in his seriousness, did the old man speak. There was nothing of ambassadorial dignity; nothing of conscious goodness; nothing that said, “I am holier than thou.” But such winning gentleness; such pure concern; such earnest solicitude, that the brother who had been losing his interest in spiritual things amid the absorbing life of natural good—amid his

farm, his mill, and his merchandise—felt scales dropping away from the blinded eyes of his soul, and saw by that interior light which comes in from heaven. And seeing, he answered, with drooping head and falling voice—

“It is not well with me, I fear. My delight is not in the law of the Lord. I do not meditate thereon. Perpetually, my thought dwells in the things of this world. In my sowing and reaping; in my gathering and grinding; in my gaining and hoarding. Even as the rich husbandman in the gospel, whose harvests overflowed his barns, I have been planning to pull down mine and build greater, so as to lay up goods for many years. You have sent a tremor of fear through my heart; and I hear a strange, solemn voice, asking, ‘What if thy soul be required of thee this night?’ ”

“Be wise, then, my brother. Yet do not take counsel of fear; for, in fear there is bondage. Love—delight—casteth out all fear. God’s true service is from love not fear. From affection, not

from constrained obedience. Is this clear to your mind?"

"As noonday," was answered.

"You did not see this a little while ago," said the preacher.

"I knew that it was so; knew it from thought—but, until now, not from perception. Ah, my brother! You have shown me a way to walk in that I did not see before; but it is a more difficult way, and I do not see the gate of entrance. I can think and do, by constraint; can force my thought, for a time at least, up into heavenly regions, and compel myself to keep, in act, the law of God. But I cannot change my affections by any effort of will; cannot enforce delight. If I do not love God's law, what is to help me? And soberly and sadly, I fear that I do not love it. I have said, often, among the brethren—'This is my assurance; Whereas, once I was blind, now I see; therefore, have I passed from death unto life;'—but now, I have no assurance, for I do not *love*; and love is the fulfilling

of the law. You have come to me as a disturber and not as a comforter. I believed myself one of God's chosen ones; now the light of his countenance is withdrawn."

"It is never withdrawn," answered the preacher, "but always turned towards the children of men. God's love never fails. It is in love that he now troubles you, darkening false hopes that he may establish such as are true and abiding. Over the heart he alone has empire. He alone can change its quality; he alone can give that delight in his law which is felt by angels, and without which we can never enjoy their companionship."

"He changes the heart, I know."

"And you believed, long ago, that he had changed yours!"

"I did; but, alas! I am not changed. My delight is not in his law."

"You left Him to do the work alone," said the preacher, "and all at once. To wash you every whit clean from inherited evils in a mo-

ment of time. And in the belief that this had been done, you thought yourself fit to dwell with angels; and thus secure, turned to your farm, and your mill, and gave up your life to the world. You forgot that regeneration must progress from the feebleness of a simple vivified germ of life, to birth; and onward from tender infancy to the stature of a full man—that you must coöperate with God, and work out your salvation with fear and trembling before him—that while he stood without, knocking, you must open the door. ‘Behold I stand at the door and knock. If any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to him.’ The opening of the door is our work, my brother; and until that work is done, the Lord cannot enter and give delight in his law.”

“But how are we to open the door?”

“That question involves the all of a religious life,” answered the preacher. “And until it is clearly answered and fully comprehended, we grope in the dark, and our feet stumble along uncertain ways. But here again, his word is a

lamp unto our feet and a light unto our path. Note this remarkable feature in the Ten Commandments, which are an epitome of the whole Divine Word, and contain, in a summary, all the laws of spiritual life. We are not required to do difficult or impossible things; but, simply not to do evil things. Not to have idols; nor take the name of God in vain; nor profane the Sabbath day by worldly thoughts and employments; not to murder, or commit adultery, or steal, or bear false witness, or indulge a spirit of covetousness. I have often heard it said that these Divine laws could not be kept by man; and that faith alone and not obedience must save him. But, herein lies a fatal error. Obedience is the essential of faith. A true faith in God, is vital with effort. Just look at these commandments. How plain and easy the way they point out. There is no requirement of good deeds; but a simple shunning of what is wrong. 'Behold I stand at the door and knock.' You hear the summons, but how shall the door be opened? What will draw

back the bolt, and turn the rusty hinges? The answer is ready. Put away evil."

"I do not break the Ten Commandments. So far as they go, I am blameless," said the brother.

"His words are spirit and life," answered the preacher. "To the mere natural man, they speak of natural things, and bind him by external restraints; to the rational man, they speak a higher language, and illustrate his reason; to the spiritual man, they give divine laws for the government of the thoughts and intents of the heart. The natural man sees in the precept, 'Thou shalt not steal,' only a prohibition of actual theft; while the rational man understands it as binding him to upright dealing; but, the spiritual man looks down into his heart, and in the very desire to appropriate to himself what is another's—goods, honor, or praise—recognizes a broken commandment. Nay, my brethren! We are all commandment-breakers in some degree of their significance. And it is in ceasing to break them,

as we understand them, that we open the door at which the Lord stands knocking. At his entrance, the evil desires that ruled us are removed, and he implants good desires in their stead.

“And now,” continued the old preacher, in his tender, impressive way, “let me add this essential doctrine, which must ever be kept in mind. Simply of ourselves, we can do nothing. We are but finite—created—have in us no life that is not the perpetual gift of God—and, therefore, cannot even open the door by the putting away of evil, except through strength from above; and so, in every effort of resistance to evil allurements, we must look to God for strength. If we so look, in acknowledgment of our weakness, power will come, and we shall say effectually as he said, in the hour of temptation, ‘Get thee behind me, Satan!’ Now, if it be well with you, my brother—if you have really begun to open the door of your heart—then you are beginning to feel delight in the law of the Lord; are beginning to love the things of heaven more than the things of this world; and

to desire the riches of Divine love, more than gold and silver that perish ; for, just in the degree that God enters into our hearts, does he bring in with him affections opposite to those through the resistance of which the door was opened. But if there be none of this love and delight, it is not well with you, my brother."

"It is not well with me, I fear," was answered in all sadness of spirit ; "but, God helping me, I will open the door at which I hear him knocking, and may he give me delight in his law."

On the morning of the third day, the white-haired preacher left his benediction, and passed onward. Many days afterwards, as his entertainer stood at the door of the empty guest-chamber and looked in, these few words fell softly from his lips, "An angel unawares." A short space he lingered with clasped hands, and eyes most earnestly glancing upwards. There had come, even as he stood there, an evil allurement, and with prayer to God for strength, he had resisted its power. Then flowed in through the

open door of his heart a love of good, before which that evil enticement disappeared, as night when the day advances, and his soul was filled with blessedness and peace.



XIII.

IF I WERE ONLY IN HEAVEN.

“IF I were only in heaven!”

There are few mortal lips from which these words, or something equivalent to them, have not fallen in hours of pain, sorrow, or disappointment, when hope in the world grew faint, and the old foundations of happiness seemed crumbling into ruin.

“If I were only in heaven!”

The words came sighing through pale lips.

“And you expect to go there?”

The tone in which this was said expressed a doubt.

“We all expect to reach heaven at last. God is merciful.”

“He is good to all, and kind even to the unthankful and evil. But what is heaven? Three



IF I WERE ONLY IN HEAVEN.

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times, within a few days, I have heard you wish yourself there."

"Heaven is a place of happiness ; there are no tears there ; no sorrow ; no pain ; no cruel disappointments, nor heart-rending separations. Heaven is heaven. The very word is full of signification."

"And you expect to go there?"

A second time was this uttered, and now the doubt it expressed quickened in the mind of the complainer a feeling that was rather more of earth than heaven.

"You seem to question my fitness," she said, with just a shadow of indignation in her voice.

"Far be it from me to judge the state of any one. God alone knoweth the hearts of his children."

"And still, you ask, in a doubting way, if I expect to go to heaven when I die."

"To a place of happiness, which lies in the far distance, and towards which we sail through life as mariners on a perilous voyage?"

"Yes ; the haven of felicity."

“Where you trust to moor your time-worn bark when the stormy ocean is crossed?”

“Yes; trusting in God’s mercy.”

“I’m afraid you will be disappointed,” said she who had assumed the office of monitor.

The pale cheek of the complainer flushed, and her sad eyes threw out some rays of light that gleamed from an earth-enkindled fire.

“Heaven is not in the far distance,” continued her friend. “We do not reach it at the end of our earthly journey. We must enter long, long before that time, or its sweet rest and peace can never be ours. And we are in heaven when our souls are filled with heavenly affections. This infilling of the soul alone takes place on earth; and thus we enter. We must have some of the joys of heaven here, or we cannot receive its fuller delights when mortal puts on immortality. The life of heaven must be born in us in time, or it cannot be developed in eternity. Your present state, my dear friend, is not one of preparation for that paradise towards which your eyes stretch

so longingly, but one of self-affliction and vain repinings. You are closing your heart to heavenly influences, instead of opening it to their reception. I speak plainly, for you have all at stake."

The flush faded from the complainer's cheeks; her eyes lost the sudden brightness which had gleamed out upon her friend; and she sat silently pondering this strange language—strange to her—while a shade of fear crept into her heart. Were her hopes of heaven resting, indeed, on so sandy a foundation? Was she vainly looking beyond the darkness in which she sat to a world of brightness and beauty? Would there be no heaven for her to enter when the weary burden of life was laid down? The questions crowded upon her.

"Come out from beneath the shadows with which you have surrounded yourself," said the friend, "and enjoy the cheerful sunlight. Instead of idly longing for a heaven that lies afar off, receive heaven in your heart, in the delight that flows in with all good deeds. Be a worker

in the vineyard of your Lord, not a weak repiner ; a faithful servant, not a talent-hider. They who are entering heaven grow more and more peaceful in spirit ; more and more resigned to the Father's will ; more and more willing to work and wait in patient hope. Instead of wishing themselves in heaven, as a place of rest afar off, they are daily tasting of its sweet felicity."

"You take away the foundations on which my feet have rested. You scatter my hopes to the wind. I have looked to you for consolation, but you have none to offer."

"If I have broken the foundations on which your feet rested, it is that you may plant them more surely on the Rock of Ages. If I have scattered vain hopes to the wind, it is in order that living hopes may spring up in your heart. If you have looked to me for consolation, and found it not, then, I pray you, look higher ; even unto Him who says, 'Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest.'"

“But my heart is crushed. I have no strength; no hope in life; all that I held dear has departed; and I have only wished to die and be at peace.”

“There are other crushed hearts; others without hope; others from whom all the dear ones have departed. Think of them, and of their loneliness and suffering instead of your own; and as pity comes into your heart, think whether it is in your power or not to ease a pain; to send a ray of comfort into a mind sitting in darkness; to speak a word that may reach the mourner with consolation. God is the great Comforter, but he acts through angels and men in his ministrations of good, thus making his blessings double. They who act with him are partakers in the peace, joy, and consolation that flow through them, and are thus received into heaven, while, as to the body, they are still in the world of nature.”

For awhile after this plain-talking friend had left, the lady sat in her usual place in the dim, closely-curtained room, where most of her time

was spent. But the truths which had been uttered in her ears did not pass as the idle winds. She dwelt on them, pondering their scope and meaning, and seeing them in clearer and clearer light. But states of feeling soon turn our thoughts in their own direction. It was not long before she was musing on her unhappy condition, and in the weariness of life that came back upon her, she murmured the oft-repeated words—

“Oh, if I were only in heaven! If I could only die and be at peace!”

Then came back the suggestions of her friend; and with such a force of conviction that she clasped her hands together, and rising up, moved in some agitation of mind about the room. As she did so, the thought of a poor sick woman in the neighborhood came into her mind. She had heard of her serious illness on the day before, but let the intelligence pass with only a word of pity. It did not once occur that she ought to go, or send to the woman's relief. Now the thought of

her came with a suggestion of duty, and acting upon that suggestion, she rang the bell.

"Mary," she said, as a domestic came in to answer to the bell, "have you heard from Mrs. Ellis to-day?"

"Yes, ma'am," was replied.

"How is she?"

"Very sick, ma'am, they say."

"What ails her?"

"Pleurisy, I think, ma'am."

"Have you been over to see her?"

"No, ma'am."

"I wish you would step in and see how she is, Mary. She may be suffering for want of proper attention. I would like to know."

The girl left the room with a look of surprise on her face that did not escape the lady's notice. Its meaning was partly understood.

"How did you find her, Mary?" was asked when the girl returned.

"I wish you could only see for yourself, ma'am," said Mary. "It would make your

heart-ache. If somebody don't look after her she'll die, and then what will become of her poor little babies?"

There was a look of real distress in the girl's face.

"Is she in want of anything?" inquired the lady.

"O ma'am, won't you just step over and see for yourself," was answered in an appealing way. "She is in want of everything; I don't believe her poor little children have had anything to eat this day!"

"Mary!"

"Indeed, ma'am, and I shouldn't wonder at all. To think of it, in a Christian neighborhood!"

"Somebody should have looked after her," said the lady, in a tone meant to blame every other person in the neighborhood except herself.

"What's everybody's business is nobody's business," replied the girl.

The sight that met the lady's eyes, when, under

the force of a strong self-compulsion, she entered the room where this sick woman lay, gave her, too, the heart-ache. Alone, exhausted with pain, without fire or food for her children, or medicine for herself, she was stretched on a hard straw bed, which no hand had beaten up or smoothed for days. As the lady came in, a gleam lit up her dull eyes, which turned with an appealing look to the three little children who were sitting close together in silence on the floor. From the instant that weary complainer entered this room, she forgot herself in an overpowering pity. A few questions were asked and answered—then prompt hands and a prompt will changed the whole aspect of things. There were food, medicine, warmth and comfort, in a room where, a little while before, all was cold, desolate, and exhausted. As the lady looked around, and thought of the change a few words and deeds had wrought as if by magic—saw the look of peace, rest and hope which had settled over the sick woman's pale face, and followed her almost smiling

eyes, as she looked after her cleanly dressed and now happy children—she felt a deeply penetrating glow of satisfaction, and a sense of tranquility to which she had long been a stranger. She had forgotten herself in an earnest desire to help another, and the heavenly delight that always springs from good deeds done from right impulses was flowing into her soul.

“How is it with you to-day?” asked the friend who had spoken so plainly. It was a week after this first visit to the sick woman. She was holding the lady by the hand, and looking earnestly into her countenance, which had more light and hope in it than she had seen there for a long time.

“As well as I could expect.” A faint smile hovered around her sad lips, hiding the pain which lay there like a shadow from some mountain of sorrow.

“Ah, what little girl is this?”

A child had entered the room in a quiet,

half-timid way, and not with the confidence of a genuine home feeling.

"The child of a poor sick woman in the neighborhood," was answered. "The mother was very ill, and there was no one to see after this little one. I brought her home. She has been here for several days."

"You have been to see her mother, then?"

"Oh, yes; I've called over every day to see after her. She would have died, I believe, if I had not met her case promptly. It is shameful to think how, in the very midst of a rich neighborhood of people calling themselves Christians, a sick woman may be left to suffer and die without a hand being raised to help her. I wouldn't have believed it, if this case had not come under my immediate notice."

"I see," said the friend, still holding the lady's hand, and smiling into her face, "why that old, sad, life-weary look has departed."

An answering smile lit up suddenly the lady's countenance.

“Has it departed?” she asked, half wondering at her friend’s remark.

“Yes, and may it never return to tell of brooding self-torture, and idle longings after that heavenly peace in the far-off future, which never comes except as the fulness of a heavenly peace that flows into the soul while patiently doing its work in the harvest-fields of time. You have opened the gate of heaven, my dear friend, and your feet are upon the threshold. The first draft of its pure crystalline air has swelled your lungs with a new sense of pleasure, and given to your heart new pulsations of delight. Do not linger in the outer courts, but enter in, daily, by good deeds done in the name of our common humanity. Sit no longer idle. A stagnant mind, like stagnant water, breeds noxious vapors and hideous monsters. Health and happiness come only in active duty. If, at home, you find not work enough to keep your thoughts and hands busy, go abroad, and by good deed and good example, become a co-worker with the angels, into whose

blessed company you have so many times desired to enter through the gate of death. We must become associated with them here, my friend, or we cannot enter into their society above. Heaven is a state of mutual love; but if we are mere lovers of self here—idle repiners instead of active servants in the Lord's work of doing good—how can we pass by death into heaven? Death only separates the soul from its mortal body; it makes no change in its quality. What we are as to quality—good or evil; selfish or unselfish—when we depart hence, will we remain to eternity. And so, my friend, if you wish to come fully into heaven when you die, press forward through the gate by which you have now entered, and the further you progress here, the higher will be your position when, at the close of this earthly life, it shall be said unto you—‘Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world!’ ”

XIV.

UNDER A CLOUD.

“WHAT a joyous creature!” said a friend, glancing, as he spoke, towards an attractive girl, whose laugh rang out at the moment, and went musically fluttering through the rooms. “It always does me good to meet the outflowing life of such a being. She is like a ruddy blossom in a bed of sombre-hued plants, catching the sunbeams, and throwing them, by reflection, all around her.”

“She is a fair, human flower,” I answered, “with rich stores of perfume in her heart; only, I have thought, sometimes, a little too gay and joyous. She seems to live in perpetual sunshine.”

“I see no objection in that. Flowers grow in the sunshine. It is their life-imparting element,”

was returned. "Give me the radiant natures; souls that dwell beneath unclouded skies; hearts that know no shadows."

"The sky is not always sunny," I remarked.

My friend looked at me, as one who did not clearly see the drift of this sentence.

"There are intervals, in which clouds obscure the heavens—intervals of rain."

He looked at me still; a slight change passing over his face, as if some unpleasant thoughts were coming into his mind; but did not reply.

"Are not clouded skies, and falling rains, also good for the flowers? Would their richest beauty—their sweetest odors—come out, if they dwelt only in the sunshine? Nay, more than this, would the fruit-germ perfect itself fully in the flower-heart, if there were given only hot, untempered and over stimulating beams of light from time opening bud to falling petal?"

My friend was yet silent. The illustration brought doubts and queries not easily set aside.

"The soul is not a flower," he said, at length.

“Because plants need the alternations of rain and sunshine, does it follow that the same is true of our souls?”

“There is a perfect correspondence between the soul and nature,” I returned; “for was not the world of nature created for man? And, if created for him, must it not in all things correspond to what is in him? If it were not so, how would it be possible for him ever to be at one with nature? Granting this perfect correspondence, then, as to objects and their relations in the phenomenal world, with the inner world of mind, will not growths, processes and developments in the latter, advance by corresponding laws to final results? So, nature becomes, in a higher degree, our teacher.”

The merry laugh rang out again. It was near us,—the maiden had crossed the room, her arm drawn within that of another maiden, and now stood the centre of a little group. The laugh was musical as before; and yet, something of its sweetness to the ear was gone. We paused to

observe her, and could not help but hear the sentences that dropped from her lips. Flippant trifles first—then a thoughtless personality, that must have hurt the one at whom it was thrown—and then a witty sarcasm, at the expense of an excellent, but peculiar lady, who made one of the company.

“Too much sunshine,” I remarked, leaning to my friend, as the group separated, and our merry maiden passed beyond the range of our voices. “The life blood is too abundant—the growth too lusty. She needs the tempering of clouds and rain.”

“Trouble—sorrow—or sickness. Is that what you mean?”

“Whatever God sees best,” was my answer. “He knoweth the heart, and understandeth what discipline is needed. She is with him, and he will not suffer the good in her to be lost.”

Again the bird-like, warbling laugh went through the rooms. A sigh, almost at the same moment, parted my friend's lips. Either my

suggestions, or the want of harmony between the beautiful and glad exterior of the maiden and the glimpses she had given of her inner state, had changed his feeling towards her. He was disappointed, as we so often are in plucking a beautiful but unfamiliar flower, to find the odor unpleasant.

"Perhaps you are right," he said, in a changed voice. "There may be need of clouds and rain."

"There is always need of them," I remarked; "just as much need of them for the perfection of a human soul, as for the perfection of a plant or a tree. When the poet said—

‘Into each life some rain must fall,
Some days must be dark and dreary,’

he was not playing with figures of speech, but uttering a truth of universal application."

"It may be so," the friend remarked, with increasing sobriety of manner—"but, I cannot see why the soul, of necessity, must have dark days and rainy seasons for the perfection of its life. I cannot see why one like Miss Saroni, for instance,

may not grow into a true, loving and perfect womanhood, and yet dwell always in sunshine. I know that our higher nature must be developed; that we must rise above the natural into the spiritual, and become heavenly-minded. But, I am of those who do not believe in a gloomy, self-tormenting religion. Why should doing right, and being right, according to God's precepts, shadow a man's soul?"

"It is right living that breaks the clouds which darken our sky," was my answer. "Religion is life—a life in harmony with divine precepts. The natural life into which we are born is below this, and responsive to the world of nature—unhappily, through inherited evils, always, in its development, turning itself away from good. Did you not observe that tendency in Miss Saroni? Bright, happy, lovely as she is, a contempt for others has already found a place in her mind. Will not that feeling under the strong stimulant of sunshine, grow vigorously? Depend upon it, there must be dark days, winter and rain for her,

as for all. A new ground must be prepared in her mind ; new seeds sown—even spiritual seeds, which are divine truths—and these must be sheltered from scorching heats, and receive dews and rains. So, of necessity, in order that the first life, which is by nature evil and selfish, may recede, and permit a new life to be born, states of trouble, of sorrow, or affliction, must come. If man had not fallen from his first estate, all would have been different. His natural life, developed in just order, would have been as a garden ready for spiritual seed, which being cast into the earth, would have germinated and grown into goodly plants bearing spiritual fruit. But it is different now. The natural mind is filled with evil seeds, and the growth of evil plants is rank and rapid. It follows, that unless these be removed, hurt or hindered in some way, no good seed can find a lodgment or grow. The hurting, the hindering and the removing, take place for the most part, through misfortunes, afflictions, sickness, or troubles, by which natural things recede from the

affections, and the soul is led to aspire after heavenly and eternal things. We must all pass under the cloud; we must all have gloomy days; we must all suffer, that life from heaven may be born within us."

A few years of sunshine followed, in which our young friend did not grow more lovely in spirit, though richly endowed both in mind and person. Beauty made her vain; mental superiority caused her to think with contempt of those with feebler endowments; wealth, instead of being thankfully accepted, created a feeling of superiority. Vanity, pride, self-estimation, contempt for inferiors—such were the evil plants fast attaining to a full growth in her mind. It was needful, in the wise provisions of a good Providence, that, to save her and others from the sad fruitage of these, she must pass under a cloud. And so, dark days came—angry skies and swift-driving tempests.

I did not see her during these dark days; but afterwards, I met her frequently. What a beauty there was in her life! She had been long under

the cloud, and the shadows it left still lingered about her face; but, as thought and feeling stirred in her, responsive to your touch, how sweetly the quiet smiles broke through! There remained in her lower tones, a memory of past suffering, that touched you at times; but her words were ever cheerful. Of others, she spoke with considerate kindness; dwelling on the good in them—rarely touching the evil. Never a complaint passed her lips; but she often referred to the wise and good dealings of God to the children of men. Once she said to me, “I am only happy when useful.” What a volume of meaning the sentence contains! Let not its triteness take from its just significance.

“Was it not best?” I said, to the friend with whom I had talked years before—“best for her that the sun was hidden and the rain fell?”

“Perhaps,” he answered, thoughtfully.

“Do you question it?” I asked.

“No, I will not say that. Doubtless it was best. One thing is certain, the sphere of her life is sweet. You cannot pass an hour in her com-

pany without being more in love with right principles—without feeling an inspiration to good deeds.”

And it was even so. In the winter of her adversity “much wheat had grown;” in the night of sorrow she had been still gathering strength; while under the cloud, holy truths had dropped into her mind and germinated, the cloud still shadowing her sky, and tempering both light and heat, until the springing seeds gathered strength at the root, and lifted up green blades into the caressing air. She was coming into the light and heat again; but now, the sun whose rays poured down upon her life with blessing, was spiritual and divine.



XV.

NOW AND TO-DAY.

OUR to-days—how inadequately are they appreciated? Now—in which all the blessings of life are alone included—with what strange indifference do we turn from its rich offerings, to feast our eyes on gardens of delight, that spread away, temptingly, in a future that forever mocks us with the unattained? There are pearls and diamonds scattered all along the paths we are treading, but we cannot stop to gather them for looking at the mountains of gold that gleam against the far horizon. All of our unhappiness springs from neglected or misspent nows and to-days. The present moment is God's loving gift to man. In it we weave the web of our future, and make its threads bright with sunshine, or dark with evil and suffering.

"Come and kiss me, papa," cried a voice full of music and love.

But papa was in the hall below, with coat, hat and gloves on, all ready to go forth to the day's business, and little pet Louis was up in his mother's chamber, only half-dressed.

"Haven't time now, I'll kiss you when I come home," papa answers back, and then starts from the house in a hurried manner.

A pearl lay at his feet, and Mr. Edwards had failed to lift the precious thing. He would have been so much the richer for life.

"Dear Lu!" he said to himself, as he moved along the street, "that kiss would have done us both good, and consumed but half a minute of time; and I hardly think that I shall find another half minute so richly freighted with blessing to-day."

At the corner of the next square, Mr. Edwards waited four minutes for an omnibus. It was lost time. Four minutes spent with dear, pet Louis,

how full of pleasure they would have been!—how fragrant their memory through all the day!

When Mr. Edwards arrived at his store, neither his morning newspaper nor his book-keeper was there. So, he could neither get at his books, which were in the fire-proof, nor glean from his Gazette the commercial news, or state of the markets. No customers were in at so early an hour. And so Mr. Edwards passed the next twenty minutes in comparative idleness, his mind burdened just enough to make him feel uncomfortable, with the thought of little Louis, grieving over the coveted parting kiss.

At the end of twenty minutes, the book-keeper arrived. The honey of Louis' parting kiss would have sweetened the temper of Mr. Edwards for the day. Without it, under slight annoyances, his spirit grew sour. He spoke to the book-keeper with slight impatience, and in words of reproof for being late. A sick child was the excuse; and as he looked into his clerk's face, he saw that it was pale with trouble and watching.

Mr. Edwards sighed. The pressure on his feelings was heavier. Everything, during that day, seemed to possess a strange power of annoyance; and to the failure to lift a pearl from his feet in the morning, was added many failures of a like character.

“Will you please to buy an almanac?” said a childish voice, near him.

“No, I do not please,” was the gruff reply of Mr. Edwards. He spoke as he looked up, on the moment’s impulse. The timid, half frightened face of a tender child, scarcely a year older than his darling at home, glanced upon him for an instant, and then he saw only the retreating form of a little girl. Before his better feelings prompted a recall of his repellant words, she was in the street, and out of sight.

This was a little thing in itself, but it told sharply on the feelings of Mr. Edwards, who was naturally a kind-hearted man. He sat very still for a little while, then, sighing again, went on with the letter he was writing when the little

almanac-seller disturbed him at his work. Another "now" had passed, leaving a shadow, instead of the sunshine it might have bestowed.

"Can you help me out, to-day? I have a large note falling due."

"I cannot," replied Mr. Edwards.

The neighbor looked disappointed, and went away.

Now that neighbor had many times obliged Mr. Edwards in a similar way. Our merchant had no balance over in bank. That may be said for him. But he had money out on call, and could, without inconvenience, have helped his neighbor. He remembered this after it was too late. The "now" had passed again, and left upon his memory another burden of unquiet thought.

And so the hours of that day passed, each one leaving some "now" unimproved—some pearl lying by the wayside—some offered blessing untouched; and when, at a later period than usual,

Mr. Edwards turned his steps homeward, he felt as if he had lost instead of gained a day.

Dear Louis! Away, faster than his feet could carry him, went the heart of Mr. Edwards, towards his darling boy. Somehow, the father's imagination would present no other image of the child but that which showed him in grief for the kiss denied that morning.

"Where is Louis?" were the first words spoken by Mr. Edwards, as he entered the room where his wife was sitting. It was at least an hour after nightfall.

"In bed, and asleep," was the answer.

At another time, this answer would have produced no unpleasant feelings; now, it was felt almost like a painful shock.

Mr. Edwards went to the chamber where Louis lay, in his little bed. The gas was burning low; he turned it up, so that the light would fall upon his face. How beautiful it was, in its childish innocence! How placid! And yet, the father's eyes saw, looking, as they did, through the me-

dium of a troubled state, a touch of grief upon the lips, and a shade of rebuking sadness on the brow of his darling.

“Precious one!” he said, as he bent to kiss the pure forehead. “I wronged both your heart and mine.”

It seemed to him, after the kiss and confession, that the sleeper’s face took on a more peaceful, loving aspect. For many minutes, he stood gazing down upon his unconscious boy; then, murmuring to himself—“It shall not be so again, sweet one!”—lowered the gas to a taper flame, and went with noiseless footsteps, from the room.

For the gain of half a minute to business, in the morning, what a loss had there been to love, and peace, and comfort, for the space of hours. Let us take care of our nows and our to-days; for herein lies the true secret of happiness, and the true philosophy of life.

XVI.

A LESSON IN LIFE.

“**I** WILL stop now,” said Mr. Fanshaw, at forty-five, pausing in his life-work, and looking back over the broad fields through which he had been reaping for years, and then at his barns and store-houses, that were filled to overflowing. “Having enough and to spare, why toil on, eagerly and anxiously, for more? Having borne the burden and heat of the day, why not accept the rest that a liberal competence offers? Let others work now; my part is done. If I add to the wealth already accumulated, can I enter more into its enjoyments? Then why strive on? No; I will stop now, and take the good life has to offer. Only a few years remain to me at best; why waste them in this dull round of simple money-making?”

Mr. Fanshaw was a philosopher, in his own estimation. He pondered this view of the case at intervals which grew briefer and briefer, seeing it in a stronger and stronger light, until the proposition was fully accepted, and he calmly arranged to withdraw from all active participation in business. With the very first step in this arrangement came a shadow of misgiving. Then he went all over the argument by which he had been influenced to retire from active life, but could discover no flaw therein. He had ample wealth, yielding an income beyond what, even in luxurious living, he could spend. Why, then, dig and delve? Why gather in more, and lay it up for others to scatter? Why waste his energies for naught?

Mr. Fanshaw regarded the argument as conclusive, and notwithstanding the shadow of misgiving which, at the very first movement, crept over his feelings, he walked steadily to the result in view. It took him over a year to get disentangled from the many business connections in which he was

involved, during all of which time that faint shadow kept growing more and more palpable, and when, at last, freed from cares and duties, he sat down in the sunshine of his prosperity to simply enjoy, he could perceive little or no warmth in that sunshine. He looked up, doubting and questioning, into the sky that bent over him. It was not blue, and bright, and sparkling to the eye, but had a kind of leaden dullness that left its hue upon his feelings. A strange unrest began to disturb his spirit. Wearily the days passed, and the nights became more and more sleepless.

“Go into the country,” said a friend, who saw, in the face and manner of Mr. Fanshaw, the evidences of a growing life-weariness. “Build yourself a handsome villa, and surround it with all the charms of nature made more beautiful by art.”

But Mr. Fanshaw had no taste for rural life or landscape gardening. His mind had received no cultivation in that direction; and there were no early associations to draw him back to woods and

fields. A city boy, he had grown up among city scenes, and the city's hard features were stamped upon him. For over twenty-five years all interest had been absorbed in bales and boxes of goods; in stocks and bills; in mortgages, bonds and money securities. And now, that he no longer cared for these things, what came in to take their places and hold his restless thoughts?

"Visit Europe," suggested another friend, who saw the growing discontent of Mr. Fanshaw.

This was conned over. A year in London, Paris, Florence and Rome looked promising. He went, and enjoyed to the degree a man of his education and habits of life is capable of enjoying; but found the annoyances incident to traveling abroad in excess of the pleasure. So he came home, to find home drearier than when he went away. There was a time when Mr. Fanshaw enjoyed the daily newspaper; but then he took a lively interest in cotton and grain, and the price of leading stocks. Political affairs had also a certain attraction; for the political world was in

close connection with the business world. He moved about, too, among live men, all on the alert, like himself, and ambition, as well as interest, kept him posted in common affairs, so as to stand their equals. But now he had ruled himself out of the current movements of the day, and gradually losing the "run of things," lost the old desire for his newspaper—no, we err—not the old desire, but the old enjoyment. The newspaper was resorted to as before, with a certain pleasurable anticipation; but rarely did its columns yield the honey he would find. Dry and unprofitable all. Daily the sheet was thrown aside in disappointment.

Out of the live current, Mr. Fanshaw was moving in a small, sluggish eddy, round and round. Vitality was departing every day. Mind was growing weaker through an impotent exhaustion of itself; and as it grew weaker he grew unhappier. Plainly, Mr. Fanshaw had made a mistake in retiring from business. So one ventured to say.

"I know that," was his answer. "I didn't understand myself."

"Go into business again," was suggested.

But Mr. Fanshaw shook his head, answering, "No; I am out of the current, and have not the boldness to venture in again. Nearly three years of idleness have reduced the old vigor of mind. I feel that I should be unequal to the requirements. A business life, as the world goes now, is a different thing from floating with the tide. There is no success but for those who strain every muscle pulling against the stream."

And this was the simple truth. Ease, idleness, and loss of mental vigor through sluggishness of mind, had robbed Mr. Fanshaw of strength to such a degree that he dared not venture again out upon the waters where he had once held his place among the boldest and most vigorous.

Two years more of a fruitless life, and then, without warning, down from a summer sky fell a desolating storm, sweeping from hundreds and thousands, all over the land, the gathered wealth

of years. While it raged, a bolt struck the fair edifice which Mr. Fanshaw had builded, and it fell in hopeless ruin to the ground. Of all its goodly stones, scarcely one remained unbroken or in its place.

Stunned at first; then appalled by the disaster; and then quickened into a fearful sense of his helplessness and hopelessness, Mr. Fanshaw's first state of mind was one of bitter complaints. He called this misfortune a hard and cruel dispensation; and when a wiser one than himself drew near, and sought to lift his thoughts into a purer atmosphere, where he could see stars shining in the midnight sky, he rejected his offered words of instruction, and called God cruel and unjust.

"Nay, my friend, say not so," was answered. "God is good, and just, and wise. Out of this darkness, he will, in his own good time, I trust, bring you into marvelous light. His ways are not as our ways, but they lead upwards; he sees not as we see; but in his purposes are eternal felicity. I think that he has work for you yet in this

world, Mr. Fanshaw ; work that only your hands can aright perform.”

But Mr. Fanshaw rejected the proposition. Worldly wealth had been the greatest good in his eyes. Through long years he had toiled for it with an unabating ardor. And now, it was swept from his grasp.

It so happened that, a few days afterwards, Mr. Fanshaw was in the house of this wiser friend, to whom in remembrance of warm expression of interest and sympathy, he had come again, moved by the bitterness of a state that began searching about for relief. While they sat talking, a child was engaged in building a toy castle. He had blocks of all sizes and shapes, adapted to his purpose, and steadily rose wall and buttress, tower and battlement, growing under his hand in symmetry, fitness and beauty, into what seemed in his eyes, like a very creation of his will, until the goodly edifice was completed.

The friend called Mr. Fanshaw's attention to the child, and they observed, with interest, the

entire cheerful absorption of his mind in what he was doing, each well-considered piece going into its place to the murmur of a song that issued in a continuous flow from his lips.

“He is building as men build,” said the friend, “happy in his work. The mental activity required, gives an exhilarant tone to his feelings, and he sings as he toils.”

At last, the castle was completed, and the child stood and surveyed it, now looking from one point of view, and now from another, and now walking round and round.

“Observe,” said the friend ; “he is silent now. No music is floating through his lips. The work is done, and he is beholding it with satisfaction ; but is he as happy in contemplating his work as he was in doing it?”

After a few minutes, the child ceased inspecting his castle from all sides, and going to a sofa, threw himself thereon with a sigh that went audibly through the room. There he lay, for some time, listlessly, but with his eyes upon his finished

work. Then he manifested signs of restlessness, got up and walked around his goodly edifice again—sighed, and went to the farther end of the room—then came back, and renewed the inspection. But he did not sing any more.

“Do you understand the case?” asked the friend.

Mr. Fanshaw had a dawning perception of its meaning; yet answered with the shake of the head.

“The child’s experiences are the man’s in miniature. He is growing restless for a lack of employment. Most earnestly his thought went into the construction of that castle, and he looked to the beautiful form he was creating, as something in which he would find happiness. But, the building is completed, and he is not happy. His mind has fallen away from its strain; the warmth of friction is felt no longer; thought is dull, and he has a foretaste of that aching void in the heart, of which so few men understand the meaning, or for which so few who experience it ever find the

cure. Now, let me throw down his castle, and see what the result will be."

"Oh, no, no," answered Mr. Fanshaw, interposing; "that would be cruel."

"Cruel only on the outside, but with a sweet nut of kindness in the centre," was the almost tenderly spoken answer, for it was the father who said this; and rising, he moved past the toy building, touching it as if by accident. A crash, and the blocks lay a mass of shapeless ruins on the floor. With the crash, rang out a cry of pain, and the child, who had worked through a whole hour to erect this goodly castle, flung himself in grief across a chair. His sobs and tears went to the heart of Mr. Fanshaw, and he said, aside, to his friend—

"That was not well done."

"We shall see," was the answer.

A few minutes passed in a silence only broken by the child's sorrow.

"My son." The father spoke in tenderness, yet firmly. There came no answer.

“Come to me, Alfred.”

The boy came, slowly, great drops glistening on his eyelashes, and wetting his cheeks.

“That was a fine castle, my son.”

The child answered with a sob. He saw, yet, only the ruins.

“A beautiful castle,” added the father, “and you builded it.”

Out of the ruins began to arise, in the child’s mind, the fair creation which he had wrought only a little while before. His quivering lip grew firmer, a glimmer of light shone through his tears.

“And you can build it again. Be a brave, strong boy. Clear away the ruins, as we do after a fire, and set the foundations once more.”

Only a word or two beyond these were needed. The child was soon at his castle-building again, all absorbed in the work; and soon the low music of his happy heart came murmuring through his lips.

“There was a sweet nut within that bitter

husk, Mr. Fanshaw," said the friend; "and if you will take a lesson from a child, and go to building again, you will find a sweet nut in your misfortune also."

And doubtless he found the rich and juicy kernel, for in a little while afterwards, under the spur of necessity, he was out in the busy world, and at work, trying to build once more.



XVII.

AN HOUR WITH MYSELF.

“ I DON'T think you know yourself, Mr. Self-complacency.”

I had been speaking, a little boastfully, of my good qualities; particularly of my disinterestedness and integrity, when the individual with whom I was conversing, threw that wet blanket over me.

“Not know myself?” so I said to myself, after parting, a little coldly, with my plain-spoken friend, “that’s a good joke! If I, Mr. Self-complacency, don’t know myself, pray who does know me? Certainly, not you, Mr. Freespeech!”

I was piqued at Mr. Freespeech, and could not get over his remark, which involved a great deal that was not very flattering to my self-esteem. It annoyed me like a mote in the eye.

“Not know myself?” I kept repeating the words, every now and then, all day ; and when I sat down alone in my room at night, they came in to disturb the hours that usually passed with me in calm self-satisfaction.

“Not know myself?” What did he mean by that? I saw by his eye and voice, that he was in earnest. Somebody has been talking about me, and putting wrong constructions on my acts, and Mr. Freespeech has been more ready to believe evil than good. He’d better examine into his own quality ; and I’ll say so to him the next time we meet.

But I couldn’t ease my mind by thoughts of this character. My self-esteem was wounded.

“Not know myself?” I repeated for the hundredth time. “What did I say to Mr. Freespeech that led him to make so uncharitable a remark? Why, that in voting for Mr. Cleveland, I only looked to the public good, as I hoped I would always look in everything, and did look. I considered, and still consider him the best man for

the place. He wanted to elect Mr. Grant; but I don't like Grant. He is capable enough no doubt; but our views differ widely in many particulars."

And here came in the questions, as if I were talking with another, who asked—

"Why don't you like Mr. Grant? Why do you prefer Mr. Cleveland?"

I went down into myself to get an answer to these queries, and after groping about for some time, came up, feeling a little more uncomfortable than when I went down. Why? What had I discovered? Just this: the impression that, as President of the Bank, Mr. Cleveland would be far more likely to favor my interests than Mr. Grant; and here was the reason why I preferred him above the other, and had voted for him at the meeting of stockholders.

"Very disinterested, indeed, Mr. Self-complacency!" said I, two warm spots glowing on my cheeks. I felt them, as if lighted candles were held near my face. "I wonder if Mr. Free-

speech really suspected this? The two warm spots burned.

It seemed very probable, so clearly did the truth stand out before me. I tried to cover it up, to hide the mean fact; but it stood there, looking at me with a sinister leer. So this was my disinterestedness; this my regard for the public good? There had been some very favorable testimony on the side of Mr. Grant; and Mr. Freespeech had strongly urged his fitness for the place, on the ground of his known inflexible character. "Make him President," he said, "and there will be no partial administration of affairs; no individual preference on discount days; no leaning towards personal friends." Now, I, Mr. Self-complacency, standing in occasional need of bank facilities, and having experienced many uncomfortable disappointments on discount days, had, away back in my thought or purpose, the desire to secure an interested friend near the source of bank favors. So I had voted for Mr. Cleveland.

“I must own up in this case,” said I, feeling something like a culprit. “The real motive is plain enough now, but it was removed so far away out of sight that I didn’t suspect its existence. And I don’t believe Mr. Freespeech saw it. How could he? It was nothing but spleen, on his part, growing out of disappointment. And his language and manner had so sweeping a signification, as if I were the most selfish man in the world; as if I never acted from purely disinterested motives! He forgets how I refused to take advantage of his ignorance in regard to the price of an article, by which I might have gained an advantage over him of several hundred dollars.”

This thought restored, in a measure, my good opinion of myself; but only for a little while. I took another plunge down amid the more hidden things of my mind, and saw that I had not been influenced in this act by any regard for my neighbor’s good whatever—that his interest had not been in all my thoughts; but only the desire to

gain for myself a good reputation, which I considered of more value than the few hundred dollars I would make in a transaction, that a day or two would expose as a bit of sharp practice in trade. I could even recall the processes of thought by which I was influenced at the time. How I had pictured to myself the way he would talk about me among certain persons, with whom, above all things, I wished to stand well; the contempt they would feel for me, and even the pecuniary injury I might sustain. While on the other hand, the refusal, on my part, to accept an advantage over my neighbor's ignorance—and I was careful to let Mr. Freespeech understand all about the matter—would be told to my honor and benefit.

I actually covered my face with my hands, when close self-examination gave me this picture, and said, "For shame, Mr. Self-complacency!"

Again I went down amid the secret places of my heart, and looked steadily at the thoughts and purposes which were hidden away there from

casual observation. I was liberal, taking my means into consideration, in regard to public and private charities; and made, yearly, a handsome contribution for the support of the church to which I belonged. The thought of this liberality had always been a pleasant thing to me; and it was one of my habits to contrast my generous devotion of the means which God had placed in my hand, with the selfish withholdings apparent in others.

And in all this, I now saw the stain of a mean and almost hypocritical self-seeking. Had I looked to the good of my neighbor, or only to a good reputation for myself? Had I desired the peace of a good conscience, or only the approval of man? With a singular clearness of vision I saw myself, as to interior motives, and I could not find a single one of these motives that was not all clouded and disfigured by selfishness, pride, and a spirit of vain self-glory. I gave to the church. Why? In order that the gospel might be preached for the salvation of souls!

This, I had often made bold to say, was the reason why I gave. But I could not find, in my heart, any genuine love of either saints or sinners ; certainly not enough to induce me to give two hundred dollars a year for their safety or salvation. I'm at the confessional, reader, and shall make a clean breast of it. No—I could find love of self, taking on multiform shapes ; but not a genuine love of anything or anybody out of myself.

“Rather humiliating this, Mr. Self-complacency,” said I.

“Yes, it is humiliating,” I answered to myself. “Very humilitating.”

I gave, always, to public charities when called upon, and made a merit of this in my own thoughts. I considered myself a truly benevolent man. Now, as I groped amid the springs of action, I could find scarcely the feeblest sentiment of pity for suffering humanity ; but the desire to stand well, as a kind-hearted and generous

man, in the eyes of other people, was strong and active.

"Is there no good in me," I exclaimed, with a low, creeping shudder, starting to my feet, and beginning to walk the floor of my room.

"There is none good but one. That is God."

I remembered the words of our Saviour; and they came to me, now, with a fulness of meaning never comprehended before. I had read them, and heard them read in the great congregation of worshipers, hundreds of times. And yet, for all this, I, Mr. Self-complacency, thought myself a very good kind of man, and far better than the common run of people. Indeed, I was in the habit of contrasting myself with other men, and taking the conclusion in my own favor; when it was not at all improbable that the chief difference between us was that I gave more heed to appearances, from a certain love of reputation, than they did.

"Mr. Freespeech was right. I didn't know myself; nor do I know myself now, in this new

guise? Am I, indeed, so wanting in honor, humanity and integrity? My cheeks burn as if in the glow of a furnace!"

Take an hour with yourself, reader, and get down among the concealed motives by which your actions are governed, and, maybe, you will not like the new aspect in which you appear, any more than I like the one in which I have appeared.









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